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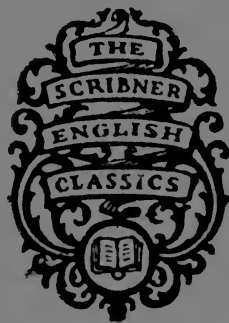
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# BROWNING'S HORTER POEMS

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**The Scribner English Classics**

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EDITED BY

**FREDERICK H. SYKES, PH.D.**

TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

**ROBERT BROWNING**  
**SHORTER POEMS**

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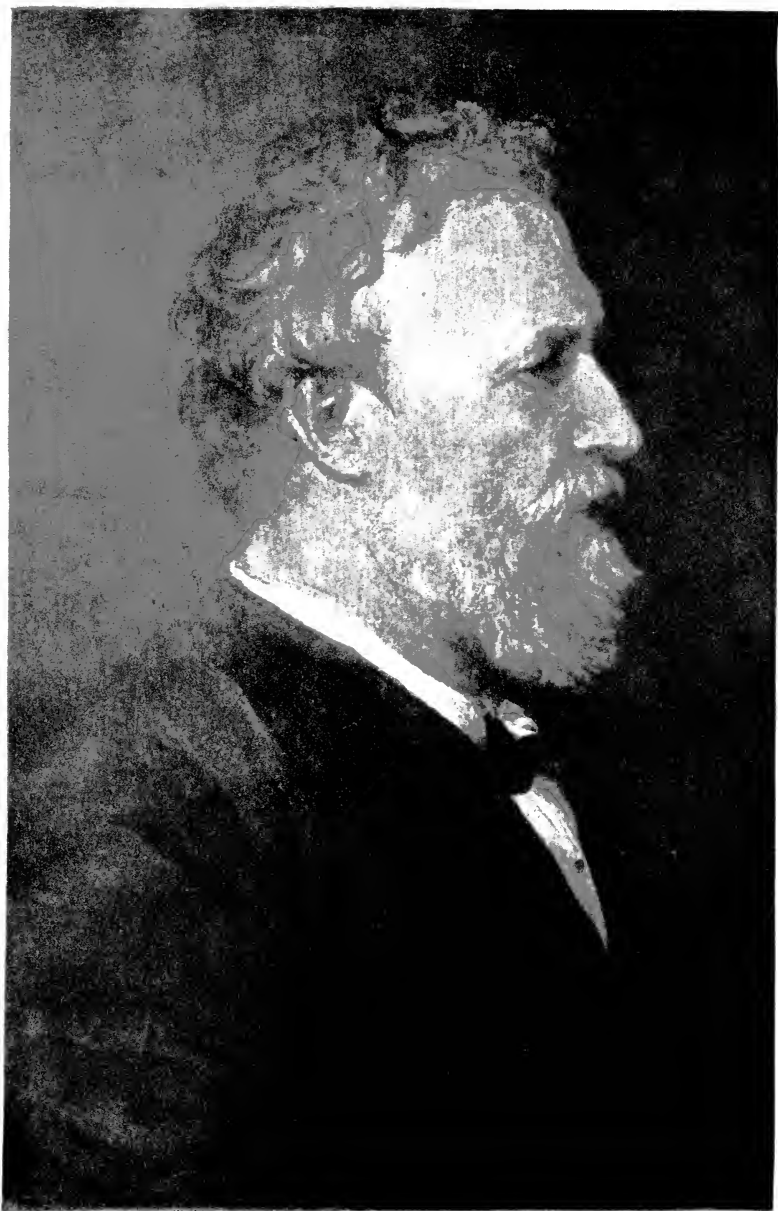
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Robert Browning

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The Scribner English Classics

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# ROBERT BROWNING

## SHORTER POEMS

SELECTED AND EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

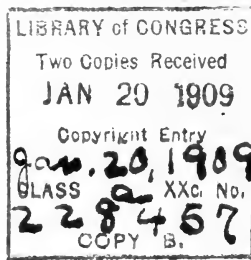
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# INTRODUCTION

## I.—BIOGRAPHICAL

**R**OBERT BROWNING was born in Camberwell, a London suburb, in May, 1812. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England, a highly cultivated man, acquainted with foreign and classical, as well as English literature, himself a poet, and interested in music and art. His mother was described by Carlyle as "the true type of a Scottish gentlewoman"; she was a woman of strong religious convictions, and the home atmosphere was that of a cultivated Nonconformist family. The boy spent a happy childhood, surrounded by healthy and uplifting influences. In his poem *Development*, beginning—

My father was a scholar and knew Greek,

it is probable that he recalls some of the incidents of his early home training. He read extensively, especially the great Elizabethans, and at the age of twelve wrote verses after the style of *Byron*. But his poetic development dates from a day in May, 1826, when his mother, at his request, brought him the works of Shelley and Keats. The spirit of revolt in *Queen Mab* took such hold of his youthful mind that for two years he was a vegetarian and professed atheist. His recovery did not shake his faith in his new-found seer, and the influence of Shelley is clearly discernible in his early work. In the little poem *Memorabilia*, and in the preface he wrote in middle life to some supposed letters of Shelley's which had been discovered, he pays a high tribute to the genius of his predecessor.

Browning attended some classes at University College, London in continuation of his home education, and decided to devote himself to literature. His father not only left him free

to make his own choice, but bore all the expenses of *Paracelsus* (1835), *Sordello* (1840), and *Bells and Pomegranates* (1841-6). It is pleasant to think that this generosity was appreciated by the youthful poet, who wrote of his father afterwards:—"It would have been quite unpardonable in my case not to have done my best. My dear father put me in a condition most favorable for the best work I was capable of. When I think of the many authors who have had to fight their way through all sorts of difficulties, I have no reason to be proud of my achievements. My good father sacrificed a fortune to his convictions. He could not bear with slavery, and left India [the West Indies], and accepted a humble banking-office in London. He secured for me all the ease and comfort that a literary man needs to do good work. It would have been shameful if I had not done my best to realize his expectations of me."

The publication of Browning's first work was, however, due to the generosity of an aunt, who heard that he had written a poem and offered to meet the expense of printing it. *Pauline, the Fragment of a Confession* was completed on October 22, 1832, and published early in 1833, without the name of its author. It is interesting for several reasons: in the first place, for its indebtedness to Shelley, which is everywhere apparent and is openly acknowledged; in the second place, for the evidence it gives of the interests which were then occupying Browning's mind; and in the third place, for its autobiographical character. Arnould, one of Browning's friends in early manhood, says that the poem reflects the author's "own early life as it presented itself to his own soul viewed poetically." Browning signed the poem "V. A. XX.," which he afterwards interpreted "*vixi annos viginti*"—"I have lived twenty years."—He was afterwards inclined to make fun of his youthful hero, and said five years later that the poem was "written in pursuance of a foolish plan I forget, or have no wish to remember; involving the assumption of several distinct characters; the world was never to guess that such an opera, such a comedy, such a speech, proceeded from the same notable person. Mr. V. A. was Poet of the party, and predestined to cut no inconsiderable figure. 'Only this crab' remains of the shapely Tree of Life in my Fool's Para-

dise." Later in life he took a more lenient view of his youthful effort, and it is now included in the collected editions of his works. It was favorably reviewed by some of the leading critics of the day at the time of its appearance, though one notice described it briefly as "a piece of pure bewilderment,"—a foretaste of much misunderstanding of the same kind the poet was to meet with in after life.

In the winter of 1833-4 Browning spent three months at St. Petersburg, nominally in the consular service, actually on the personal invitation of a friend who was consul-general at the Russian capital. His visit had effect in a five-act drama of Russian life, *Only a Player Girl*, written in 1842-3 and never published. His next important work, written during the six months preceding March, 1835, was *Paracelsus*—a study of the life and character of the famous sixteenth century physician, whose ideas had something in common with those of the Christian Scientists and Theosophists of the present day. The poem is cast in dramatic form, though it is not, strictly speaking, a drama; it is chiefly remarkable for the expression of thoughts and views of life which Browning developed more clearly and fully in his maturer work.

*Paracelsus* had important consequences. In the first place it was read by an older poet, already established in popular favor, Elizabeth Barrett, who recognized in it "the expression of a new mind." John Forster, a well-known man of letters of the time, pronounced it the work of "a man of genius, who has in himself all the elements of a great poet, philosophical as well as dramatic." It led, moreover, to Browning's introduction to the great actor-manager of the day, Macready, and his invitation to be present at a supper given after the performance of a successful tragedy of the time—Talfourd's *Ion*. The toast of "The Poets of England" was proposed, and it was expected that either Wordsworth or Walter Savage Landor would be called upon to respond to it, for both were present; but instead there arose an unknown young man whose name many of the company learned for the first time as that of Robert Browning. In conversation after supper Macready said to the young poet, "Write me a play, and keep me from going to America,"—

that being apparently regarded by the great English actor as the last desperate resource to save his falling fortunes. It was agreed that same evening that the subject of the drama should be historical and English, and in accordance with the arrangement then made *Strafford* was written. It was produced on May 1, 1837—just before Queen Victoria came to the throne. Macready himself took the leading part, and Helen Faucit (a delightful actress of Shakespearean heroines, who later became Lady Martin), achieved a brilliant triumph in the part of Lady Carlisle. The drama was successful, but not sufficiently so to restore the already ruined fortunes of Covent Garden Theatre. The withdrawal of one of the principal actors precipitated a financial crisis, and the theatre was closed. The play was, however, judged of sufficient merit for Messrs. Longman to publish it at their own expense, and the loss incurred fell, in this instance, upon the publishers, and not upon the poet himself, or his relatives.

An incidental criticism of *Paracelsus* greatly affected the form of Browning's next work, *Sordello*, and ultimately injured his poetical reputation for a quarter of a century. *Paracelsus* was thought by some critics to be diffuse, and a charming Quakeress of the time, Caroline Fox, wrote to one of Browning's friends, "Doth Mr. Browning know that Wordsworth will devote a fortnight or more to the discovery of a single word that is the one fit for his sonnet?" In deference to these criticisms, Browning aimed in his next poem at the greatest possible condensation; "if an exclamation would suggest his meaning, he substituted this for a whole sentence." The result was a poem of very deep interest, but not at all easy to follow. Its difficulty is chiefly due to the extreme conciseness of the style, but partly to the unfamiliarity of the subject—the story of a mediæval troubadour and predecessor of Dante, and the strife between the imperial and the papal or popular party in North Italy in the thirteenth century. Browning found in it an outlet for the expression of his political and religious, as well as his literary, aspirations, but at the time it failed almost altogether to be understood. The early Victorians with one accord made up their mind that it was incomprehensible. Mrs. Carlyle could

not, she said, make out whether the hero was a man, a city, or a book. Tennyson said he only understood two lines of it—the first—

“Who will may hear Sordello’s story told,”

and the last line—

“Who would has heard Sordello’s story told,”

and both were lies. The best story, however, of the British public’s inability to appreciate *Sordello* is that told of Douglas Jerrold by Thomas Powell in his “Living Authors of England.” The distinguished contributor to *Punch* was recruiting at Brighton after a long illness. In the course of his convalescence a parcel arrived from London which contained, among other things, this new volume of *Sordello*. The doctor had forbidden Jerrold the luxury of reading, but in the absence of his wife and her sister, who were nursing him, he indulged in the illicit enjoyment. A few lines put Jerrold in a state of alarm. Sentence after sentence brought no consecutive thought to his brain. At last the idea crossed his mind that in his illness his mental faculties had been wrecked. The perspiration rolled from his forehead, and smiting his head, he sat down on his sofa, crying, “O God, I am an idiot!” When his wife and her sister came back, he pushed the volume into their hands and demanded what they thought of it. He watched them intently while they read; at last his wife said, “I don’t understand what the man means; it is gibberish.” The delighted humorist sank back in his seat with a sigh of relief: “Thank God I am not an idiot!”

In order to complete the studies for *Sordello*, which the poet had begun in the British Museum Library, he in 1838 paid his first visit to Italy. He went by sea from London to Venice, and on the voyage wrote two short poems included in this volume, *Home Thoughts, from the Sea* and “*How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*.” The reception of *Sordello*, published after his return home, did not increase the publishers’ confidence in his work, and he determined to issue his poems in a cheap form on his own responsibility. This was the origin of the *Bells and Pomegranates* series, cheap issues in yellow-

paper wrappers, which were sold first at 12 cents, then at 25 cents, and finally at 60 cents, but which can now hardly be had for as many dollars. The title refers to the bells and pomegranates which adorned the hem of the high priest's robe (Exodus xxviii. 34), and is explained by the poet to mean "a mixture of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought." The series included all the early short poems, and all the dramas except *Strafford*. In his dramatic work Browning unfortunately got further and further away from actual connection with the stage, though two of his plays *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* and *Colombe's Birthday*, have been successfully acted, both in England and America. The most delightful of these dramatic poems is *Pippa Passes*, which at once became popular. It is not properly speaking a drama, though it is so described by the author; it is rather a series of dramatic incidents connected by a strain of song. Browning was walking alone in a wood on the outskirts of London when the image flashed upon him of "someone walking thus alone through life; one apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exercising a lasting, though unconscious, influence at every step of it." This original conception is charmingly worked out in the character of Felippa or Pippa, the little silk winder of Asolo, a hill town in North Italy which had taken Browning's fancy during his first visit. Pippa is introduced in her humble room springing out of bed on her one holiday—New Year's Day, and singing the first of her songs, a selection from which has been here chosen as the best introduction to Browning for the reader who makes his first acquaintance with the poet through this volume.

In this period of the early 'forties Browning was an active member of the younger literary set in London, already impressing those who knew him by his intense intellectual vigor. In 1844 Arnould writes to that other friend of Browning's (Alfred Domett), celebrated by the poet as "Waring," and addressed in the concluding lines of *The Guardian Angel*: "Browning's conversation is as remarkably good as his books, though so different: in conversation anecdotal, vigorous, showing great thought and reading, but in his language most simple, ener-



getic, and accurate. From the habit of good and extensive society he has improved in this respect wonderfully. We remember him as hardly doing justice to himself in society; now it is quite the reverse—no one could converse with him without being struck by his great conversational power—he relates admirably; in fact, altogether I look upon him as *to be* our foremost literary man.”

Before the publication of the *Bells and Pomegranates* series was completed, Browning had formed a tie which affected the whole current of his life and profoundly influenced his poetry. Elizabeth Barrett was six years his senior, and her precocious genius had already won her an established place in literature. Her weak health, due to an accident in saddling a pony when she was a girl, and her studies of Greek gave a touch of romance to her character which was exaggerated by popular report. She was described by a friend as reading almost every book worth reading in almost every language, and having a Greek text of Plato bound like a novel so as to deceive the family physician. Yet she was entirely lovable in her gentle womanliness, and had nothing of the blue stocking in her disposition. Browning had for some years admired her poetry, and she had in her published works expressed appreciation of his; but when in 1841 a common friend, Mr. John Kenyon, took him to call upon her, she felt unable, on account of her weak health, to depart from her custom of not seeing strangers, and it was not until January, 1845, that, again at Kenyon's suggestion, Browning opened direct communication with her by means of a letter. “I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett,” he began, and later in the same letter he added, “and I love you too.” Yet neither at this time had any thought of marriage, and when later in the year a meeting was followed by a proposal Miss Barrett decisively rejected it. Browning, however, persisted, and a secret engagement followed. Secrecy was necessary, for although Miss Barrett was forty years of age and had an independent income, she lived under a peculiar kind of paternal despotism. Her father was almost a religious monomaniac, and would not tolerate any suitors for the hands of his daughters. “One admirable trait, however, Mr. Barrett

did possess—he was nearly always away from home till 6 o'clock." As the courtship proceeded Miss Barrett's health greatly improved, and in September, 1846, they were quietly married, leaving a few days after the ceremony for France and Italy. Mr. Barrett's comment was characteristic: "I have no objection to the young man, but my daughter should have been thinking of another world." He refused ever to see his daughter again. The marriage made a great sensation when it was announced, for it was entirely unexpected. Wordsworth was startled into his one recorded jest: "So Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett have gone off together! Well, I hope they may understand each other—nobody else could."

Fortunately they did understand each other: their marriage proved just what Milton says the poet's life should be—in itself "a true poem." Mrs. Browning left an abiding record of her happiness in the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*—certainly her best work, and among the finest love poetry in the English language. Browning's devotion to his wife finds fit expression in *The Guardian Angel*, *One Word More*, and *Prospice*—to mention only poems included in this volume. Mrs. Browning continued to gain strength, a son was born to her, they made many friends in Florence, where they chiefly resided, and in France and England, where they paid occasional visits. Outside poetry, the chief interest of both was in the struggle for Italian liberty, expressed by Browning in *The Italian in England*, and by Mrs. Browning in numerous poems. Indeed, the death of the great Italian statesman and diplomatist, Cavour, who had done so much for Italian unity, had no small part in bringing about her own, which took place in June, 1861.

The date is important, because it marks the end of the richest period in Browning's life. He did not produce so much as before—after his marriage there was a long silence till the publication of *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* in 1850, and five more years elapsed before *Men and Women* appeared; he published nothing else until after his wife's death. But in poetry it is quality, not quantity, that counts; and if from Browning's works one volume were to be selected for which, if necessity so demanded, all the rest should be sacrificed, it would be, in the

opinion of the majority of Browning readers, precisely this series of *Men and Women*. It will be seen that by far the larger proportion of the selections included in this volume are from *Men and Women*, and this is not a personal or accidental choice. It rests upon the practically unanimous opinion of Browning critics, one of whom says that this series "represents Browning's genius at its ripe maturity, its highest uniform level. In this central work of his career every element of his genius is equally developed, and the whole brought into a perfection of harmony never before or since attained."

After the death of his wife, Browning left Florence, and never returned to it. He took a house in London, and gave his chief attention for some years to his son's education. After a while, he went out into society, and became one of the literary lions of the day. He received many honors from the universities, and his work rose rapidly in public esteem. The change may perhaps be dated from the publication of *The Ring and the Book* in 1868-9, though there had been indications of it for some years before. *The Ring and the Book* is Browning's longest and, in some respects, his greatest work. Its subject is a seventeenth century story of the murder of an innocent girl by her husband, an account of which Browning found in an "old yellow Book" he picked up at a second-hand stall in Florence. The story is told over and over again, from the point of view of various persons concerned, and extraordinary skill is shown in the maintenance of the interest by the keenness of the character analysis and the elevation of thought and expression. After its publication Browning's place in literature was absolutely secure.

In the 'seventies Browning often spent his summer holidays on the French coast, and there he found the subjects for some of the longer poems written during this period—*Fine at the Fair*, *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*, and *Two Poets of Croisic*. He was in France at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, and made his way to England with some difficulty on the approach of the Prussian invaders. His stirring ballad, *Hervé Riel* (p. 157), was sold to the publishers of *Cornhill* in 1871, and the proceeds given for the relief of sufferers

by the siege of Paris. *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* is a study of the character of Napoleon III, in which he had been interested for many years on account of the part which the Emperor played in the liberation of Italy. *La Saisiaz* is the outcome of a visit to the Lake of Geneva in company with a friend who died there, Miss Anne Egerton Smith, to whose memory it is dedicated. These poems are largely psychological or metaphysical in character, and find no place in our selections with the exception of the charming lyrics which serve as prologue and epilogue to the *Two Poets of Croisic*. One great literary interest of his later years, the study of Greek literature and history, has its representatives in *Pheidippides* and *Echellos*.

Of Browning's daily life in London at this time the following account is given by Professor Dowden, the details being supplied by a Mr. Grove, who was for seven years in Browning's service:—"Browning rose without fail at seven, enjoyed a plate of whatever fruit—strawberries, grapes, oranges—were in season; read, generally some piece of foreign literature, for an hour in his bedroom; then bathed; breakfasted—a light meal of twenty minutes; sat by the fire and read his *Times* and *Daily News* till ten; from ten to one wrote in his study or meditated with head resting on his hand. To write a letter was the reverse of a pleasure to him, yet he was diligent in replying to a multitude of correspondents. His lunch, at one, was of the lightest kind, usually no more than a pudding. Visits, private views of picture exhibitions and the like followed until half-past five. At seven he dined, preferring Carlowitz or claret to other wines, and drinking little of any. But on many days the dinner was not at home; once during three successive weeks he dined out without the omission of a day. He returned home seldom at a later hour than half-past twelve; and at seven next morning the round began again. During his elder years he took little interest in politics. He was not often a church-goer, but discussed religious matters earnestly with his clerical friends. He loved not only animals but flowers, and when once a Virginia creeper entered the study window at Warwick Crescent, it was not expelled but trained inside the room. To his servants he was a considerate friend rather than a master."

Of the last period of Browning's life the most striking external feature was his return to Venice and Asolo—the little hill village with which he had fallen in love on his first visit in 1838. He and his sister entered into most friendly relations with an American resident at Venice, Mrs. Arthur Bronson, from whom they received many kindnesses. Their first acquaintance with her was in 1880, and when in 1881 they were again contemplating an autumn in Venice, she placed at their disposal a suite of rooms in the Palazzo Guistiniani Recanati, which formed a supplement to her own house—"making the offer with a kindly urgency which forbade all thought of declining it. They inhabited these for a second time in 1885, keeping house for themselves in the simple but comfortable foreign manner they both so well enjoyed, only dining and spending the evening with their friend. But when, in 1888, they were going, as they thought, to repeat the arrangement, they found, to their surprise, a little apartment prepared for them under Mrs. Bronson's own roof. This act of hospitality involved a special kindness on her part, of which Mr. Browning only became aware at the close of a prolonged stay; and a sense of increased gratitude added itself to the affectionate regard with which his hostess had already inspired both his sister and him. So far as he is concerned, the fact need only be indicated. It is fully expressed in the preface to *Asolando*.

"Although the manner of his sojourn in the Italian city placed all the resources of resident life at his command, Mr. Browning never abjured the active habits of the English traveller. He daily walked with his sister, as he did in the mountains, for walking's sake, as well for the delight of what his expeditions showed him; and the facilities which they supplied for this healthful pleasurable exercise were to his mind one of the great merits of his autumn residences in Italy. He explored Venice in all directions, and learned to know its many points of beauty and interest, as those cannot who believe it is only to be seen from a gondola; and when he had visited its every corner, he fell back on a favorite stroll along the Riva to the public garden and back again; never failing to leave the house at about the same hour of the day. Later still, when a

friend's gondola was always at hand, and air and sunshine were the one thing needful, he would be carried to the Lido, and take a long stretch on its farther shore."<sup>1</sup>

Browning retained to the end of his life the intellectual energy which had characterized his youth. In Venice he read the English papers, and kept up his interest in politics. He read the Italian papers too, and was fond of illustrating the gay and innocent life of the Venetians from the petty crimes reported in the newspapers of what some people described as "the wicked city"—the stealing of a gondolier's oars or the theft of linen from a clothes-line. He had many friends among the animals in the Public Garden, and fed them regularly every day. Only a year before his death, he wrote from Primiero to a friend:—"Did I tell you we had a little captive fox,—the most engaging of little vixens? To my great joy she has broken her chain and escaped, never to be recaptured, I trust. The original wild and untamable nature was to be plainly discerned even in this early stage of the whelp's life: she dug herself, with such baby feet, a huge hole, the use of which was evident, when, one day, she pounced thence on a stray turkey—allured within reach by the fragments of fox's breakfast—the intruder escaping with the loss of his tail. The creature came back one night to explore the old place of captivity—ate some food and retired."

After the marriage of Browning's son ("Pen," as he still called him) to Miss Fannie Coddington of New York, they lived together in Venice on the Grand Canal at the Palazzo Rezzonico, which the young couple had bought for their permanent home. In the autumn of 1889 Browning made an excursion to Asolo, where he thought of buying a piece of land and building a little house for himself to be called "Pippa's Tower." The one thing that disappointed him in Asolo was that the silk cultivation, with all the pretty girls who were engaged in it, had been transported to other places nearer the railway—"no more Pippas," he writes, "at least of the silk-winding sort,"—but he was still delighted with the scenery and the view. On October 22nd he wrote to his brother-in-law of Asolo:—"It is an ancient city, older than Rome, and the scene of Queen

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Orr's *Life of Browning*, revised by F. G. Kenyon.

Catherine Cornaro's exile, where she held a mock court, with all its attendants, on a miniature scale; Bembo, afterwards Cardinal, being her secretary. Her palace is still above us all, the old fortifications surround the hilltop, and certain of the houses are stately—though the population is not above 1,000 souls: the province contains many more of course. But the immense charm of the surrounding country is indescribable—I have never seen its like—the Alps on one side, the Asolan mountains all round—and opposite, the vast Lombard plain,—with indications of Venice, Padua, and the other cities, visible to a good eye on a clear day; while everywhere are sites of battles and sieges of bygone days, described in full by the historians of the Middle Ages.

“We have a valued friend here, Mrs. Bronson, who for years has been our hostess at Venice, and now is in possession of a house here (built into the old city wall)—she was induced to choose it through what I have said about the beauties of the place: and through her care and kindness we are comfortably lodged close by. We think of leaving in a week or so for Venice—guests of Pen and his wife; and after a short stay with them we shall return to London.”

This intention was, however, never fulfilled. The following month he was taken ill at Venice, and died on December 12th in his son's house. The cemetery in which Mrs. Browning was buried at Florence had been closed, but a fitting home was found for his remains, along with other great poets of the English race, in Westminster Abbey. The city of Venice wished to show him the honor of a public funeral, of which the following account is given by his son, Mr. R. Barrett Brown-ing:—“A private service, conducted by the British Chaplain, was held in one of the halls of the Rezzonico. It was attended by the Syndic of Venice and the chief city authorities, as well as by officers of the Army and Navy. Municipal Guards lined the entrance of the Palace, and a Guard of Honor, consisting of City Firemen in full dress, stood flanking the coffin during the service, which was attended by friends and many residents. The subsequent passage to the mortuary island of San Michele was organized by the City, and when the service had been per-

formed the coffin was carried by firemen to the massive and highly decorated funeral barge, on which it was guarded during the transit by four 'Uscieri' in gala dress, two sergeants of the Municipal Guard, and two firemen bearing torches. The remainder of these followed in their boats. The funeral barge was slowly towed by a steam launch of the Royal Navy. The chief officers of the municipality, the family, and many others in a crowd of gondolas, completed the procession. San Michele was reached as the sun was setting, when the firemen again received their burden and bore it to the principal mortuary chapel."

Browning's last volume, *Asolando*, with its beautiful and stirring *Epilogue* (p. 181) was published on the day of his death and he was able to receive by telegraph news of its favorable reception by the reviewers to whom advance copies had been supplied by the publishers. A vast body of the foremost Englishmen of the day attended his funeral on the last day of the year when his body was laid to rest in the Poet's Corner to the strains of a special anthem arranged by Dr. Bridge, the Abbey organist, to the words of Mrs. Browning's poem, "He giveth his beloved sleep."



## II—CRITICAL

The charge of obscurity has been urged so persistently against Browning that in any critical consideration of his works it is necessary to meet it at the outset. He was certainly not guilty of intentional obscurity. On this issue he himself is the best witness, and he is to be believed on his word. He wrote to an admirer who drew attention to this accusation:—"I can have little doubt that my writing has been in the main too hard for many I should have been pleased to communicate with; but I never designedly tried to puzzle people, as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer such literature as should be a substitute for a cigar or a game at dominoes to an idle man. So, perhaps, on the whole I get my deserts, and something over—not a crowd, but a few I value more." But an author may be obscure without intending it. He may fail to arrive at a clear and definite idea in his own mind of the conceptions he wishes to express—this is the most frequent cause of obscurity—or his expression of them may fail to convey his meaning to another, so that he leaves ambiguity or doubt, even in the mind of an intelligent reader. No diligent student of Browning can believe him guilty on the first count of the indictment. He can be understood; there are no dark places in his mind which it is impossible to penetrate. On this point, the testimony of a brother poet, Mr. Swinburne, is of overwhelming weight. He says in his essay on Chapman:

"If there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect, it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. To charge him with obscurity is about as accurate as to call Lynceus purblind, or complain of the sluggish action of the telegraphic wire. He is something too much the reverse of obscure; he is too brilliant

and subtle for the ready reader of a ready writer to follow with any certainty the track of an intelligence which moves with such incessant rapidity, or even to realize with what spider-like swiftness and sagacity his building spirit leaps and lightens to and fro and backward and forward, as it lives along the animated line of its labor, springs from thread to thread, and darts from centre to circumference of the glittering and quivering web of living thought, woven from the inexhaustible stores of his perception, and kindled from the inexhaustible fire of his imagination. He never thinks but at full speed; and the rate of his thought is to that of another man's as the speed of a railway to that of a waggon, or the speed of a telegraph to that of a railway."

There is no question that Browning often demands of his reader a very considerable intellectual effort. Whether the effort is worth making, each reader must decide for himself; it depends largely upon the intellectual energy at his disposal. Browning was himself a man of very extraordinary mental powers, and he sometimes failed to realize the difference in this respect between himself and his readers. Ruskin, for instance, found one of the poems in *Men and Women* difficult to understand, and wrote to Browning to ask him about it. The poet in his reply said:

"For your bewilderment more especially noted—how shall I help *that*? We don't read poetry the same way, by the same law; it is too clear. I cannot begin writing poetry till my imaginary reader has conceded licenses to me which you demur at altogether. I *know* that I don't make out my conception by my language; all poetry being a putting the infinite within the finite. You would have me paint it all plain out, which can't be; but by various artifices I try to make shift with touches and bits of outlines which *succeed* if they bear the conception from me to you. You ought, I think, to keep pace with the thought tripping from ledge to ledge of my 'glaciers,' as you call them; not stand poking your alpenstock into the holes, and demonstrating that no foot could have stood there;—suppose it sprang over there? In *prose* you may criticise so—because that is the absolute representation of portions of truth, what chronicling is to history—but in asking for more *ultimates* you must accept less *mediates*, nor expect that a Druid stone-circle will be traced for you with as few breaks to the eye as the North Crescent and South Crescent that go together so cleverly in many a suburb."

It is these feats of mental agility, such as are described above, which appal the timid reader, but they are not always necessary. Some of Browning's poems are undoubtedly hard reading, but they are not all difficult, and it is unjust to condemn his work as a whole for what is true only of a part. Unfortunately readers of Browning often begin the study of his work at the wrong end. They take up *Sordello*, or *Fifine at the Fair*, or some of the shorter poems in which compression is pushed to its utmost limit and the transitions of thought are of lightning-like rapidity. Here the direction of a competent teacher may be of real service. If the student begins with some of the simpler and more direct poems, he will gradually become accustomed to Browning's way of looking at things and his rapid leaps from point to point. A good plan is, working in connection with the biography and following in the main the chronological order of composition, to arrange the poems in groups.

The following tentative scheme is suggested. Within the groups the easier and simpler poems are put at the beginning of each section:

1. EARLY LYRICS: Songs from *Pippa Passes*. *Cavalier Tunes*. *Home Thoughts, from Abroad*. *Home Thoughts, from the Sea*.

2. ROMANCES: *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. "*How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*." *Incident of the French Camp*. *Count Gismond*. *Hervé Riel*. *Pheidippides Echellos*. *The Glove*. *The Patriot*. *Memorabilia*.

3. POEMS OF ITALY: *My Last Duchess*. *The Italian in England*. *A Toccata of Galuppi's*. *Up at a Villa—Down in the City*. "*De Gustibus* —."

4. LOVE POEMS: *Love Among the Ruins*. *Evelyn Hope*. *A Woman's Last Word*. *My Star*. *The Last Ride Together*. *A Pretty Woman*. *One Way of Love*. *Youth and Art*. *Prologue to The Two Poets of Croisic*. *One Word More*.

5. POEMS ON ART: *The Guardian Angel*. *Andrea del Sarto*. *Epilogue to The Two Poets of Croisic*.

6. BROWNING'S LIBERALISM: *The Lost Leader*. *Instans Tyrannus*. *Why I Am a Liberal*.

7. POEMS ON RELIGION: *The Boy and the Angel. Saul. A Grammarian's Funeral. Rabbi ben Ezra. Prospice. Apparent Failure. Epilogue to Asolando.*

An alternative reading list for more advanced students might follow some such scheme as this:

1. EARLY SONGS AND STORIES: Songs from *Pippa Passes. Cavalier Tunes. The Pied Piper of Hamelin. My Last Duchess. Count Gismond. Incident of the French Camp. "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix." The Italian in England. The Lost Leader. Home Thoughts, from Abroad. Home Thoughts, from the Sea. The Glove.*

2. SELECTIONS FROM "MEN AND WOMEN" (CHIEFLY LOVE POEMS): *Love Among the Ruins. Evelyn Hope. Up at a Villa—Down in the City. A Woman's Last Word. Instans Tyrannus. A Pretty Woman. The Last Ride Together. The Patriot. Memorabilia. "De Gustibus —." A Grammarian's Funeral. One Way of Love.*

3. POEMS ON ART AND MUSIC: *Andrea del Sarto. The Guardian Angel. A Toccata of Galuppi's.*

4. POEMS ON RELIGION: *The Boy and the Angel. Saul. Rabbi ben Ezra.*

5. LATER LYRICS AND NARRATIVE POEMS: *Youth and Art. Apparent Failure. Hervé Riel. Prologue and Epilogue to The Two Poets of Croisic.*

6. GREEK POEMS: *Pheidippides. Echetlos.*

7. POEMS OF PERSONAL INTEREST: *My Star. One Word More. Prospice. Why I Am a Liberal. Epilogue to Asolando.*

In schools where this little volume may be used as an introduction to the study of Robert Browning, the prudent teacher will exercise discretion in the choice of the poems he attempts in class. The pupils should be instructed to read each poem rapidly at first, to get a general idea of its drift and purpose, and then carefully once or twice more, to understand the precise significance of each phrase, word, and even punctuation mark, for in Browning everything tells; "if an exclamation will serve his purpose, he substitutes it for a whole sentence." More advanced pupils may be led to consider Browning's work

historically, in its relation to the Romantic Revival, for it is important to realize that he does not stand apart from the general poetic development of the century, but in close connection with it. Comparisons may be suggested with Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Keats. In a few valuable pages at the end of the introductory chapter of Professor Herford's *Age of Wordsworth* it is pointed out that while these four poets were all masters of that region in which Romance and Nature meet, they lacked vision for the world of man save under certain broad and simple aspects—the patriot, the peasant, the visionary, the child. Wordsworth recognized the “Wisdom and Spirit of the universe” through communion

Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,  
But with high objects, with enduring things,  
With life and nature.

He learnt indeed

To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

But Wordsworth's poetic sympathy was much less catholic in practice than in theory. He was still “a lover of the meadows and the woods and mountains”; but the din of towns and cities was only a reminder to him of “the heavy and the weary weight Of all this unintelligible world.” To Shelley “this populous earth” was a prison, from which he fled for refuge to the far-away haunts of his own imaginings. In death alone he saw the hope of realizing

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,  
That Beauty in which all things work and move.

This is the thought that lies at the kernel of his magnificent vindication of divine beauty:

The One remains, the many change and pass;  
 Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;  
 Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,  
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,  
 Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,  
 If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!

Browning, with his superb optimism, spoke of himself, even in face of bitter personal bereavement, as one who "both lives and likes life's way." The world's darkest tragedies and most shocking failures left him undaunted:

My own hope is, a sun will pierce  
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;  
 That, after Last, returns the First,  
 Though a wide compass round be fetched;  
 That what began best, can't end worst,  
 Nor what God blessed once, prove accursed.

"You are not a lover of Nature, Mr. Browning," a lady said to him one day. "Yes, but I love human nature better," he replied.—

Man's thoughts and loves and hates!  
 Earth is my vineyard, these grew there.

While the earlier poets of the century are the poets of Nature and the Supernatural, Browning is above all the poet of human nature and the natural. In this little volume, limited in range as well as in size, it is, of course, impossible to illustrate the wealth of Browning's endless gallery of human souls. He was the first poet since Shakespeare to create a world of living men and women, with hopes and fears, passions and perplexities, familiar to the people of his own day.

"There is scarcely a salient epoch in the history of the modern world which he has not touched, always with the same vital and instinctive sympathy based on profound and accurate knowledge. Passing by the legendary and remote ages and civilisations of East and West, he has painted the first

dawn of the modern spirit in the Athens of Socrates and Euripides, revealed the whole temper and tendency of the twilight age between Paganism and Christianity, and recorded the last utterance of the last apostle of the now-conquering creed; he has distilled the very essence of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the very essence of the modern world. The men and women who live and move in that new world of his creation are as varied as life itself; they are kings and beggars, saints and lovers, great captains, poets, painters, musicians, priests and popes, Jews, gipsies and dervishes, street-girls, princesses, dancers with the wicked witchery of the daughter of Herodias, wives with the devotion of the wife of Brutus, joyous girls and malevolent greybeards, statesmen, cavaliers, soldiers of humanity, tyrants and bigots, ancient sages and modern spiritualists, heretics, scholars, scoundrels, devotees, rabbis, persons of quality and men of low estate, men and women as multiform as nature or society has made them. He has found and studied humanity, not only in English towns and villages, in the glare of gaslight and under the open sky, but on the Roman Campagna, in Venetian gondolas, in Florentine streets, on the Boulevards of Paris and in the Prado of Madrid, in the snow-bound forests of Russia, beneath the palms of Persia and upon Egyptian sands, on the coasts of Normandy and the salt plains of Brittany, among Druses and Arabs and Syrians, in brand-new Boston and amidst the ruins of Thebes."

Walter Pater, commenting on the above criticism by Mr. Symons, remarks:

"Imaginatively, indeed, Mr. Browning has been a multitude of persons; only (as Shakespeare's only untried style was the simple one), almost never simple ones; and certainly he has controlled them all to profoundly interesting artistic ends by his own powerful personality. The world and all its action, as a show of thought, that is the scope of his work. It makes him pre-eminently a modern poet—a poet of the self-pondering, perfectly educated modern world, which, having come to the end of all direct and purely external experiences, must necessarily turn for its entertainment to the world within."

The age of Shakespeare, indeed, differed profoundly from the Victorian era. The former was above all an age of action and external interests. The imagination of the Elizabethans stretched out to the New World and the mighty destinies opened up to the nation by the victory over the Spanish Armada. It was an age of confident and victorious enterprise, of single

aims, and simple issues. The age of Browning was far more complex; the problems it had to face were not problems of conquest and adventure, but of social organization, of political reform, and of the adjustment of religious beliefs to the changes demanded by philosophy and science. Browning has not Shakespeare's ease and sureness of touch in matters of faith and conscience; the problems of life present themselves to the modern poet in a more complex form, and his characters look at them in a different way. Even Hamlet, with all his tendency to hesitation and meditation, is a man of action, as are all the other Shakespearean heroes and villains; but Browning's people, from Pauline's lover to Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, are inordinately given to self-analysis. This is indeed what interests Browning—not what his people do, but what they think; and the succession of thought traced in the mind of another man must always be a difficult business for a reader to follow. Men's actions we can see and judge, in some imperfect fashion, but the motives which lie behind these actions are deeply hidden and intermingled. This complex problem interested Browning intensely, and he analyzed it with supreme skill, but such analysis is never likely to hold the attention of the average reader. He might have said of all his poems what he said of one—"my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul: little else is worth study." In this he is the child of his time, which was, like him, analytic rather than constructive; with all the robustness of his religious faith, and the healthy optimism of his outlook on life, he is intellectually an enquirer, a questioner, especially in his last period, even a doubter.

But these are high considerations. Browning's philosophy is not for school children; and yet even youthful minds can enjoy readily and easily the story and art of many of his poems, if they are encouraged to undertake the study of them in a simple, natural fashion, and enjoyment should go along with comprehension. As each poem is studied, the questions must at once be asked: What is the situation the poem sets forth? Who is the person speaking? Who is the person spoken to? the person spoken of? All readers will find difficult passages that need explanation, but even young people who give thought



to their reading should, under right guidance, get the full meaning out of the simpler ones. The full significance of a particular turn of phrase, interruption, or ejaculation may easily be missed, and it is an excellent training in accuracy and observation to fulfil the obligation Browning lays upon his readers—that they must read carefully and attentively.

While some hints and some help have been given in the notes in this regard, much has been left for the teacher and the student to do as the occasion or their own discretion may suggest. The editor has sought to give only reasonable assistance in a study of Browning which will be found all the more stimulating and delightful, because everything is not cut and dried, but much remains to be discovered, explained, and discussed.

### III—ORDER OF BROWNING'S COLLECTED POEMS

The following table gives the dates at which Browning's collected poems were originally published. Selections included in this volume are given in brackets:—

- 1833. *Pauline.*
- 1835. *Paracelsus.*
- 1837. *Strafford.*
- 1840. *Sordello.*
- 1841. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. 1.—*Pippa Passes*. [Songs.]
- 1842. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. 2.—*King Victor and King Charles.*
- 1842. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. 3.—*Dramatic Lyrics*. [*Cavalier Tunes, The Pied Piper of Hamelin, My Last Duchess, Count Gismond, Incident of the French Camp.*]
- 1843. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. 4.—*The Return of the Druses.*
- 1843. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. 5.—*A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.*
- 1844. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. 6.—*Colombe's Birthday.*
- 1845. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. 7.—*Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. [*"How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix," The Italian in England, The Lost Leader, Home Thoughts, from Abroad, Home Thoughts, from the Sea, The Boy and the Angel, The Glove, Saul.*]
- 1846. *Bells and Pomegranates*, No. 8.—*Luria; and A Soul's Tragedy.*
- 1850. *Christmas Eve and Easter Day.*
- 1855. *Men and Women*. [*Love among the Ruins, Evelyn Hope, Up at a Villa—Down in the City, A Woman's Last Word, A Toccata of Galuppi's, My Star, Instans Tyrannus, A Pretty Woman, The Last Ride Together, The Patriot, Memorabilia, Andrea del Sarto, "De Gustibus —," The Guardian Angel, A Grammarian's Funeral, One Way of Love, One Word More.*]

1864. *Dramatis Personæ*. [Rabbi ben Ezra, *Prospice, Youth and Art, Apparent Failure.*]
- 1868-9. *The Ring and the Book*.
1871. *Balaustion's Adventure*.
1871. *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau*.
1872. *Fifine at the Fair*.
1873. *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country*.
1875. *Aristophanes' Apology*.
1875. *The Inn Album*.
1876. *Pacchiarotto, with Other Poems*. [Hervé Riel.]
1877. *The Agamemnon of Æschylus*.
1878. *La Saisiaz. The Two Poets of Croisic*. [Prologue and Epilogue.]
1879. *Dramatic Idyls*. [Pheidippides.]
1880. *Dramatic Idyls*. Second Series. [Echetlos.]
1883. *Jocoseria*.
1884. *Ferishtah's Fancies*.
1887. *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in Their Day*.
1890. *Asolando*. [Epilogue.]



**BROWNING'S SHORTER POEMS.**



# BROWNING'S SHORTER POEMS

## SONGS FROM "PIPPA PASSES"

### I

"ALL SERVICE RANKS THE SAME WITH GOD"

ALL service ranks the same with God:  
If now, as formerly he trod  
Paradise, his presence fills  
Our earth, each only as God wills  
Can work—God's puppets, best and worst,  
Are we; there is no last nor first.

5

### II

"THE YEAR'S AT THE SPRING"

THE year's at the spring  
And day's at the morn;  
Morning's at seven;  
The hill-side's dew-pearled;  
The lark's on the wing;  
The snail's on the thorn:  
God's in his heaven—  
All's right with the world!

5

## III

"GIVE HER BUT A LEAST EXCUSE TO LOVE ME"

GIVE her but a least excuse to love me!

When—where—

How—can this arm establish her above me,

If fortune fixed her as my lady there,

There already, to eternally reprove me? 5

("Hist!"—said Kate the Queen;

But "Oh!"—cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

"'Tis only a page that carols unseen,

Crumbling your hounds their messes!")

Is she wronged?—To the rescue of her honor, 10

My heart!

Is she poor?—What costs it to be styled a donor?

Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.

But that fortune should have thrust all this upon her!

("Nay, list!"—bade Kate the Queen; 15

And still cried the maiden, binding her tresses,

"'Tis only a page that carols unseen,

Fitting your hawks their jesses!")

(1841).



# CAVALIER TUNES

## I

### MARCHING ALONG

#### I

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,  
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:  
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop  
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,  
Marched them along, fifty-score strong, 5  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

#### II

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles  
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!  
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,  
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup 10  
Till you're—

CHORUS.—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.*

#### III

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell  
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well! 15

England, good cheer! Rupert is near!  
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

CHORUS—*Marching along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?*

## IV

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls 20  
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!  
 Hold by the right, you double your might;  
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHORUS—*March we along, fifty-score strong,  
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!*

## II

## GIVE A ROUSE

## I

KING CHARLES, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,  
 King Charles!

## II

Who gave me the goods that went since? 5  
 Who raised me the house that sank once?  
 Who helped me to gold I spent since?  
 Who found me in wine you drank once?

CHORUS—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?* 10

*Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,  
King Charles!*

## III

To whom used my boy George quaff else,  
By the old fool's side that begot him?  
For whom did he cheer and laugh else  
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

15

CHORUS—*King Charles, and who'll do him right now?  
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?  
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,  
King Charles!*

## III

## BOOT AND SADDLE

## I

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!  
Rescue my castle before the hot day  
Brightens to blue from its silvery gray,

CHORUS—*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*

## II

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;  
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray  
“God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—

5

CHORUS—“*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*”

## III

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,  
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array, 10  
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHORUS—" *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!* "

## IV

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,  
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!  
I've better counsellors; what counsel they? 15

CHORUS—" *Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!* "  
(1842).

# THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

## A CHILD'S STORY

*(Written for, and inscribed to W. M. the Younger)*

### I

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,  
By famous Hanover city;  
The river Weser, deep and wide,  
Washes its walls on the southern side;  
A pleasanter spot you never spied;  
But, when begins my ditty,  
Almost five hundred years ago,  
To see the townsfolk suffer so  
From vermin, was a pity.

5

### II

Rats!  
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,  
And bit the babies in the cradles,  
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,  
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,  
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,  
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,  
And even spoiled the women's chats  
By drowning their speaking  
With shrieking and squeaking  
In fifty different sharps and flats.

10

15

20

## III

At last the people in a body  
 To the Town Hall came flocking:  
 "‘T is clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy;  
 And as for our Corporation—shocking  
 To think we buy gowns lined with ermine 25  
 For dolts that can't or won't determine  
 What's best to rid us of our vermin!  
 You hope, because you're old and obese,  
 To find in the furry civic robe ease!  
 Rouse up, sirs! give your brains a racking 30  
 To find the remedy we're lacking,  
 Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing!"  
 At this the Mayor and Corporation  
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

## IV

An hour they sat in council; 35  
 At length the Mayor broke silence:  
 "For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,  
 I wish I were a mile hence!  
 It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—  
 I'm sure my poor head aches again, 40  
 I've scratched it so, and all in vain.  
 Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"  
 Just as he said this, what should hap  
 At the chamber door but a gentle tap?  
 "Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?" 45  
 (With the Corporation as he sat,  
 Looking little though wondrous fat;  
 Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister

Than a too-long-opened oyster,  
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous 50  
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)  
“Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?  
Anything like the sound of a rat  
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!”

## V

“Come in!”—the Mayor cried, looking bigger: 55  
And in did come the strangest figure!  
His queer long coat from heel to head  
Was half of yellow and half of red,  
And he himself was tall and thin,  
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin, 60  
With light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,  
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,  
But lips where smiles went out and in;  
There was no guessing his kith and kin:  
And nobody could enough admire 65  
The tall man and his quaint attire.  
Quoth one: “It’s as my great grandsire,  
Starting up at the Trump of Doom’s tone,  
Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!”

## VI

He advanced to the council-table: 70  
And, “Please your honors,” said he, “I’m able,  
By means of a secret charm, to draw  
All creatures living beneath the sun,  
That creep or swim or fly or run,  
After me so as you never saw! 75  
And I chiefly use my charm

On creatures that do people harm,  
 The mole and toad and newt and viper;  
 And people call me the Pied Piper."  
 (And here they noticed round his neck 80  
     A scarf of red and yellow stripe,  
 To match with his coat of the self-same cheque:  
     And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;  
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying,  
 As if impatient to be playing 85  
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled  
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)  
 "Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,  
 In Tartary I freed the Cham,  
     Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats; 90  
 I eased in Asia the Nizam  
     Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats:  
 And as for what your brain bewilders,  
 If I can rid your town of rats  
 Will you give me a thousand guilders?" 95  
 "One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation  
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

## VII

Into the street the Piper stopt,  
     Smiling first a little smile,  
 As if he knew what magic slept 100  
     In his quiet pipe the while;  
 Then, like a musical adept,  
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,  
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,  
 Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled; 105  
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,



You heard as if an army muttered;  
And the muttering grew to a grumbling;  
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;  
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling. 110  
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,  
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,  
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,  
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,  
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers, 115  
Families by tens and dozens,  
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—  
Followed the Piper for their lives.  
From street to street he piped advancing,  
And step for step they followed dancing, 120  
Until they came to the river Weser,  
Wherein all plunged and perished!  
—Save one, who, stout as Julius Cæsar,  
Swam across and lived to carry  
(As he, the manuscript he cherished) 125  
To Rat-land home his commentary:  
Which was, “At the first shrill notes of the pipe,  
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,  
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,  
Into a cider-press’s gripe; 130  
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,  
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,  
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,  
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:  
And it seemed as if a voice 135  
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery  
Is breathed) called out, ‘Oh rats, rejoice!  
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!

So munch on, crunch on, take your nunccheon,  
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon! 140  
 And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,  
 Already staved, like a great sun shone  
 Glorious scarce an inch before me,  
 Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me!'  
 —I found the Weser rolling o'er me." 145

## VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people  
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.  
 "Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,  
 Poke out the nests and block up the holes!  
 Consult with carpenters and builders, 150  
 And leave in our town not even a trace  
 Of the rats!"—when suddenly, up the face  
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,  
 With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

## IX

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked blue; 155  
 So did the Corporation too.  
 For council dinners made rare havoc  
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;  
 And half the money would replenish  
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. 160  
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow  
 With a gypsy coat of red and yellow!  
 "Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,  
 "Our business was done at the river's brink;  
 We saw with our eyes the vermin sink, 165  
 And what's dead can't come to life, I think.

So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink  
From the duty of giving you something for drink,  
And a matter of money to put in your poke;  
But as for the guilders, what we spoke 170  
Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.  
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.  
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

## X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,  
"No trifling! I can't wait! beside, 175  
I've promised to visit by dinner-time  
Bagdat, and accept the prime  
Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,  
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,  
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor: 180  
With him I proved no bargain-driver,  
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!  
And folks who put me in a passion  
May find me pipe after another fashion."

## XI

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook 185  
Being worse treated than a Cook?  
Insulted by a lazy ribald  
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?  
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,  
Blow your pipe there till you burst!" 190

## XII

Once more he stept into the street,  
And to his lips again

Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;  
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet  
 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning 195

Never gave the enraptured air)  
 There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling  
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling;  
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,  
 Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering, 200  
 And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is  
 scattering,

Out came the children running.  
 All the little boys and girls,  
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,  
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls, 205  
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after  
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

## XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood  
 As if they were changed into blocks of wood,  
 Unable to move a step, or cry 210  
 To the children merrily skipping by,  
 —Could only follow with the eye  
 That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.

But how the Mayor was on the rack,  
 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat, 215  
 As the Piper turned from the High Street  
 To where the Weser rolled its waters  
 Right in the way of their sons and daughters!

However, he turned from South to West,  
 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed, 220  
 And after him the children pressed;

Great was the joy in every breast.

“He never can cross that mighty top!

He’s forced to let the piping drop

And we shall see our children stop!” 225

When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,

A wondrous portal opened wide,

As if a cavern were suddenly hollowed;

And the Piper advanced and the children followed,

And when all were in to the very last, 230

The door in the mountain-side shut fast.

Did I say, all? No! One was lame,

And could not dance the whole of the way;

And in after years, if you would blame

His sadness, he was used to say,— 235

“It’s dull in our town since my playmates left!

I can’t forget that I’m bereft

Of all the pleasant sights they see,

Which the Piper also promised me.

For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, 240

Joining the town and just at hand,

Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew

And flowers put forth a fairer hue,

And everything was strange and new;

The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here, 245

And their dogs outran our fallow deer,

And honey-bees had lost their stings,

And horses were born with eagles’ wings:

And just as I became assured

My lame foot would be speedily cured, 250

The music stopped and I stood still,

And found myself outside the hill,

Left alone against my will,  
 To go now limping as before,  
 And never hear of that country more!" 255

## XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!  
 There came into many a burgher's pate  
 A text which says that heaven's gate  
 Opes to the rich at as easy rate  
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in! 260  
 The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,  
 To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,  
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,  
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,  
 If he'd only return the way he went, 265  
 And bring the children behind him.  
 But when they saw 't was a lost endeavor,  
 And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,  
 They made a decree that lawyers never  
 Should think their records dated duly 270  
 If, after the day of the month and year,  
 These words did not as well appear,  
 —"And so long after what happened here  
 On the Twenty-second of July,  
 Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:" 275  
 And the better in memory to fix  
 The place of the children's last retreat,  
 They called it the Pied Piper's Street—  
 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor  
 Was sure for the future to lose his labor. 280  
 Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern  
 To shock with mirth a street so solemn:

But opposite the place of the cavern

They wrote the story on a column,  
And on the great church-window painted  
The same, to make the world acquainted  
How their children were stolen away,  
And there it stands to this very day.

And I must not omit to say  
That in Transylvania there's a tribe  
Of alien people who ascribe  
The outlandish ways and dress  
On which their neighbors lay such stress,  
To their fathers and mothers having risen  
Out of some subterraneous prison  
Into which they were trepanned  
Long time ago in a mighty band  
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,  
But how or why, they don't understand.

## XV

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers  
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers!  
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or  
from mice,  
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our  
promise!

(1842)

# MY LAST DUCHESS

FERRARA

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands. 5  
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps 15  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough 20  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 't was all one! My favor at her breast, 25



The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech, 30  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but  
thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill 35  
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set 40  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; 45  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretence 50  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity, 55  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

# COUNT GISMOND

## AIX IN PROVENCE

### I

CHRIST God who savest man, save most  
Of men Count Gismond who saved me!  
Count Gauthier, when he chose his post,  
Chose time and place and company  
To suit it; when he struck at length  
My honor, 't was with all his strength.

5

### II

And doubtlessly ere he could draw  
All points to one, he must have schemed!  
That miserable morning saw  
Few half so happy as I seemed,  
While being dressed in queen's array  
To give our tourney prize away.

10

### III

I thought they loved me, did me grace  
To please themselves; 't was all their deed;  
God makes, or fair or foul, our face;  
If showing mine so caused to bleed  
My cousins' hearts, they should have dropped  
A word, and straight the play had stopped.

15

## IV

They, too, so beauteous! Each a queen  
By virtue of her brow and breast; 20  
Not needing to be crowned, I mean,  
As I do. E'en when I was dressed,  
Had either of them spoke, instead  
Of glancing sideways with still head!

## V

But no: they let me laugh, and sing 25  
My birthday song quite through, adjust  
The last rose in my garland, fling  
A last look on the mirror, trust  
My arms to each an arm of theirs,  
And so descend the castle-stairs— 30

## VI

And come out on the morning-troop  
Of merry friends who kissed my cheek,  
And called me queen, and made me stoop  
Under the canopy—(a streak  
That pierced it, of the outside sun, 35  
Powdered with gold its gloom's soft dun)—

## VII

And they could let me take my state  
And foolish throne amid applause  
Of all come there to celebrate  
My queen's-day—Oh, I think the cause 40  
Of much was, they forgot no crowd  
Makes up for parents in their shroud!

## VIII

Howe'er that be, all eyes were bent  
 Upon me, when my cousins cast  
 Theirs down; 't was time I should present 45  
 The victor's crown, but . . . there, 't will last  
 No long time . . . the old mist again  
 Blinds me as then it did. How vain!

## IX

See! Gismond's at the gate, in talk  
 With his two boys: I can proceed. 50  
 Well, at that moment, who should stalk  
 Forth boldly—to my face, indeed—  
 But Gauthier, and he thundered, "Stay!"  
 And all stayed. "Bring no crowns, I say!"

## X

"Bring torches! Wind the penance-sheet 55  
 About her! Let her shun the chaste,  
 Or lay herself before their feet!  
 Shall she whose body I embraced  
 A night long, queen it in the day?  
 For honor's sake no crowns, I say!" 60

## XI

I? What I answered? As I live,  
 I never fancied such a thing  
 As answer possible to give.  
 What says the body when they spring  
 Some monstrous torture-engine's whole 65  
 Strength on it? No more says the soul.

## XII

Till out strode Gismond; then I knew

That I was saved. I never met  
His face before, but, at first view,

I felt quite sure that God had set  
Himself to Satan; who would spend  
A minute's mistrust on the end?

70

## XIII

He strode to Gauthier, in his throat

Gave him the lie, then struck his mouth  
With one back-handed blow that wrote

In blood men's verdict there. North, South,  
East, West, I looked. The lie was dead,  
And damned, and truth stood up instead.

75

## XIV

This glads me most, that I enjoyed

The heart of the joy, with my content  
In watching Gismond unalloyed

By any doubt of the event:  
God took that on him—I was bid  
Watch Gismond for my part: I did.

80

## XV

Did I not watch him while he let

His armorer just brace his greaves,  
Rivet his hauberk, on the fret

The while! His foot . . . my memory leaves  
No least stamp out, nor how anon  
He pulled his ringing gauntlets on.

85

90

## XVI

And e'en before the trumpet's sound  
 Was finished, prone lay the false knight,  
 Prone as his lie, upon the ground:  
 Gismond flew at him, used no sleight  
 O' the sword, but open-breasted drove,  
 Cleaving till out the truth he clove.

95

## XVII

Which done, he dragged him to my feet  
 And said, "Here die, but end thy breath  
 In full confession, lest thou fleet  
 From my first, to God's second death!  
 Say, hast thou lied?" And, "I have lied  
 To God and her," he said, and died.

100

## XVIII

Then Gismond, kneeling to me, asked  
 —What safe my heart holds, though no word  
 Could I repeat now, if I tasked  
 My powers for ever, to a third  
 Dear even as you are. Pass the rest  
 Until I sank upon his breast.

105

## XIX

Over my head his arm he flung  
 Against the world; and scarce I felt  
 His sword (that dripped by me and swung)  
 A little shifted in its belt:  
 For he began to say the while  
 How South our home lay many a mile.

110

## XX

So 'mid the shouting multitude 115  
We two walked forth to never more  
Return. My cousins have pursued  
Their life, untroubled as before  
I vexed them. Gauthier's dwelling-place  
God lighten! May his soul find grace! 120

## XXI

Our elder boy has got the clear  
Great brow; though when his brother's black  
Full eye shows scorn, it . . . Gismond here?  
And have you brought my tercel back?  
I just was telling Adela 125  
How many birds it struck since May.  
(1842).

# INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

## I

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:

A mile or so away,  
On a little mound, Napoleon  
Stood on our storming-day;  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how, 5  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.

## II

Just as perhaps he mused, "My plans  
That soar, to earth may fall, 10  
Let once my army-leader Lannes  
Waver at yonder wall,"—  
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
A rider, bound on bound  
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew 15  
Until he reached the mound.

## III

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy:  
You hardly could suspect— 20



(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
 Scarce any blood came through)  
 You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
 Was all but shot in two.

## IV

“Well,” cried he, “Emperor, by God’s grace 25  
 We’ve got you Ratisbon!  
 The Marshal’s in the market-place,  
 And you’ll be there anon  
 To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
 Where I, to heart’s desire, 30  
 Perched him!” The chief’s eye flashed; his plans  
 Soared up again like fire.

## V

The chief’s eye flashed; but presently  
 Softened itself, as sheathes  
 A film the mother-eagle’s eye 35  
 When her bruised eaglet breathes;  
 “You’re wounded!” “Nay,” the soldier’s pride  
 Touched to the quick, he said:  
 “I’m killed, Sire!” And his chief beside,  
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

(1842).

## “HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX”

[16—]

### I

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;  
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;  
“Good speed!” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;  
“Speed!” echoed the wall to us galloping through;  
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,  
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

5

### II

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace  
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;  
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,  
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,  
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,  
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

10

### III

’T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near  
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;  
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;  
At Düffeld, ’t was morning as plain as could be;  
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-  
chime,  
So, Joris broke silence with, “Yet there is time!”

15

## IV

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,  
And against him the cattle stood black every one, 20  
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,  
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,  
With resolute shoulders, each butting away  
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

## V

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back 25  
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;  
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance  
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!  
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon  
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

## VI

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay spur!  
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault 's not in her,  
We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze  
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,  
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank, 35  
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

## VII

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,  
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;  
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,  
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff; 40  
Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,  
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

## VIII

“How they ’ll greet us!”—and all in a moment his roan  
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;  
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight 45  
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,  
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,  
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets’ rim.

## IX

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,  
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50  
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,  
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;  
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or  
good,  
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

## X

And all I remember is—friends flocking round 55  
As I sat with his head ’twixt my knees on the ground;  
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,  
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,  
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)  
Was no more than his due who brought good news from  
Ghent.

(1845).

## THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

THAT second time they hunted me  
From hill to plain, from shore to sea,  
And Austria, hounding far and wide  
Her blood-hounds through the country-side,  
Breathed hot and instant on my trace,— 5  
I made six days a hiding-place  
Of that dry green old aqueduct  
Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked  
The fire-flies from the roof above,  
Bright creeping through the moss they love: 10  
—How long it seems since Charles was lost!  
Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed  
The country in my very sight;  
And when that peril ceased at night,  
The sky broke out in red dismay 15  
With signal fires; well, there I lay  
Close covered o'er in my recess,  
Up to the neck in ferns and cress,  
Thinking on Metternich our friend,  
And Charles's miserable end, 20  
And much beside, two days; the third,  
Hunger o'ercame me when I heard  
The peasants from the village go  
To work among the maize; you know,  
With us in Lombardy, they bring 25  
Provisions packed on mules, a string  
With little bells that cheer their task,

And casks, and boughs on every cask  
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine;  
 These I let pass in jingling line, 30  
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,  
 The peasants from the village, too;  
 For at the very rear would troop  
 Their wives and sisters in a group  
 To help, I knew. When these had passed, 35  
 I threw my glove to strike the last,  
 Taking the chance: she did not start,  
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart,  
 One instant rapidly glanced round,  
 And saw me beckon from the ground. 40  
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;  
 She picked my glove up while she stripped .  
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest  
 With that; my glove lay in her breast.  
 Then I drew breath; they disappeared: 45  
 It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone  
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.  
 Meanwhile came many thoughts; on me  
 Rested the hopes of Italy. 50  
 I had devised a certain tale  
 Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail  
 Persuade a peasant of its truth;  
 I meant to call a freak of youth  
 This hiding, and give hopes of pay, 55  
 And no temptation to betray.  
 But when I saw that woman's face,  
 Its calm simplicity of grace,

Our Italy's own attitude  
In which she walked thus far, and stood, 60  
Planting each naked foot so firm,  
To crush the snake and spare the worm—  
At first sight of her eyes, I said,  
“I am that man upon whose head  
They fix the price, because I hate 65  
The Austrians over us: the State  
Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!—  
If you betray me to their clutch,  
And be your death, for aught I know,  
If once they find you saved their foe. 70  
Now, you must bring me food and drink,  
And also paper, pen and ink,  
And carry safe what I shall write  
To Padua, which you'll reach at night  
Before the duomo shuts; go in, 75  
And wait till Tenebræ begin;  
Walk to the third confessional,  
Between the pillar and the wall,  
And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*  
Say it a second time, then cease; 80  
And if the voice inside returns,  
*From Christ and Freedom; what concerns*  
*The cause of Peace?*—for answer, slip  
My letter where you placed your lip;  
Then come back happy we have done 85  
Our mother service—I, the son,  
As you the daughter of our land!”

Three mornings more, she took her stand  
In the same place, with the same eyes:

I was no surer of sunrise 90  
 Than of her coming. We conferred  
 Of her own prospects, and I heard  
 She had a lover—stout and tall,  
 She said—then let her eyelids fall,  
 “He could do much”—as if some doubt 95  
 Entered her heart,—then, passing out,  
 “She could not speak for others, who  
 Had other thoughts; herself she knew:”  
 And so she brought me drink and food.  
 After four days, the scouts pursued 100  
 Another path; at last arrived  
 The help my Paduan friends contrived  
 To furnish me: she brought the news.  
 For the first time I could not choose  
 But kiss her hand, and lay my own 105  
 Upon her head—“This faith was shown  
 To Italy, our mother; she  
 Uses my hand and blesses thee.”  
 She followed down to the sea-shore;  
 I left and never saw her more. 110

How very long since I have thought  
 Concerning—much less wished for—aught  
 Beside the good of Italy,  
 For which I live and mean to die!  
 I never was in love; and since 115  
 Charles proved false, what shall now convince  
 My inmost heart I have a friend?  
 However, if I pleased to spend  
 Real wishes on myself—say, three—  
 I know at least what one should be. 120



I would grasp Metternich until  
I felt his red wet throat distil  
In blood through these two hands. And next  
—Nor much for that am I perplexed—  
Charles, perjured traitor, for his part, 125  
Should die slow of a broken heart  
Under his new employers. Last  
—Ah, there, what should I wish? For fast  
Do I grow old and out of strength.  
If I resolved to seek at length 130  
My father's house again, how scared  
They all would look, and unprepared!  
My brothers live in Austria's pay  
—Disowned me long ago, men say;  
And all my early mates who used 135  
To praise me so—perhaps induced  
More than one early step of mine—  
Are turning wise: while some opine  
“Freedom grows license,” some suspect  
“Haste breeds delay,” and recollect 140  
They always said, such premature  
Beginnings never could endure!  
So, with a sullen “All's for best,”  
The land seems settling to its rest.  
I think then, I should wish to stand 145  
This evening in that dear, lost land,  
Over the sea the thousand miles,  
And know if yet that woman smiles  
With the calm smile; some little farm  
She lives in there, no doubt; what harm 150  
If I sat on the door-side bench,  
And, while her spindle made a trench

Fantastically in the dust,  
Inquired of all her fortunes—just  
Her children's ages and their names, 155  
And what may be the husband's aims  
For each of them. I'd talk this out,  
And sit there, for an hour about,  
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay  
Mine on her head, and go my way. 160

So much for idle wishing—how  
It steals the time! To business now.

(1845).

# THE LOST LEADER

## I

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,  
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—  
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,  
Lost all the others she lets us devote;  
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver, 5  
So much was theirs who so little allowed:  
How all our copper had gone for his service!  
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!  
We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,  
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye, 10  
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,  
Made him our pattern to live and to die!  
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their  
graves!  
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen, 15  
—He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

## II

We shall march prospering,—not through his presence;  
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;  
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,  
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire; 20  
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,  
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,

One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,

One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!  
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!

25

There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,  
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,  
Never glad confident morning again!

Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,

Menace our heart ere we master his own;

30

Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,  
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

(1845).

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

### I

OH, to be in England  
Now that April's there,  
And whoever wakes in England  
Sees, some morning, unaware,  
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf 5  
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,  
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough  
In England—now!

### II

And after April, when May follows,  
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows! 10  
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge  
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover  
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—  
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,  
Lest you should think he never could recapture 15  
The first fine careless rapture!  
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,  
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew  
The buttercups, the little children's dower  
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower! 20

(1845).

## HOME-THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

NOBLY, nobly, Cape Saint Vincent to the Northwest died  
away;  
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz  
Bay;  
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay;  
In the dimmest Northeast distance dawned Gibraltar  
grand and gray;  
“Here and here did England help me: how can I help  
England?”—say,  
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and  
pray,  
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.  
(1845).

5

## THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

MORNING, evening, noon and night,  
"Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,  
Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he labored, long and well; 5  
O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,  
He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,  
And cheerful turned to work anew. 10

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done;  
I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

"As well as if thy voice to-day  
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome 15  
Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I  
Might praise Him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,  
And Theocrite was gone. 20

With God a day endures alway,  
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night  
Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth, 25  
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,  
Lived there, and played the craftsman well;

And morning, evening, noon and night,  
Praised God in place of Theocrite. 30

And from a boy, to youth he grew;  
The man put off the stripling's hue;

The man matured and fell away  
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent, 35  
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one  
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;  
There is no doubt in it, no fear: 40

"So sing old worlds, and so  
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:  
I miss my little human praise."



Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell  
The flesh disguise, remained the cell. 45

'T was Easter Day: he flew to Rome,  
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by  
The great outer gallery, 50

With his holy vestments dight,  
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career  
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,  
Till on his life the sickness weighed; 55

And in his cell, when death drew near,  
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear,  
He grew a priest, and now stood here. 60

To the East with praise he turned,  
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,  
And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,  
Vain was thy dream of many a year. 65

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped—  
Creation's chorus stopped!

“Go back and praise again  
The early way, while I remain.

70

“With that weak voice of our disdain,  
Take up creation’s pausing strain.

“Back to the cell and poor employ:  
Resume the craftsman and the boy!”

Theocrite grew old at home;  
A new Pope dwelt in Peter’s dome.

75

One vanished as the other died:  
They sought God side by side.

(1845).

## THE GLOVE

(PETER RONSARD *LOQUITUR*)

“HEIGHO!” yawned one day King Francis,  
“Distance all value enhances!  
When a man’s busy, why, leisure  
Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:  
’Faith, and at leisure once is he? 5  
Straightway he wants to be busy.  
Here we ’ve got peace; and aghast I ’m  
Caught thinking war the true pastime.  
Is there a reason in metre?  
Give us your speech, master Peter!” 10  
I who, if mortal dare say so,  
Ne ’er am at loss with my Naso,  
“Sire,” I replied, “joys prove cloudlets:  
Men are the merest Ixions”—  
Here the King whistled aloud, “Let’s 15  
—Heigho—go look at our lions!”  
Such are the sorrowful chances  
If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding,  
Our company, Francis was leading, 20  
Increased by new followers tenfold  
Before he arrived at the penfold;  
Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen

At sunset the western horizon.

And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost 25

With the dame he professed to adore most.

Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed

Her, and the horrible pitside;

For the penfold surrounded a hollow

Which led where the eye scarce dared follow, 30

And shelved to the chamber secluded

Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.

The King hailed his keeper, an Arab

As glossy and black as a scarab,

And bade him make sport and at once stir 35

Up and out of his den the old monster.

They opened a hole in the wire-work

Across it, and dropped there a firework,

And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;

A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled, 40

The blackness and silence so utter,

By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;

Then earth in a sudden contortion

Gave out to our gaze her abortion.

Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot 45

(Whose experience of nature 's but narrow,

And whose faculties move in no small mist

When he versifies David the Psalmist)

I should study that brute to describe you

*Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.* 50

One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy

To see the black mane, vast and heapy,

The tail in the air stiff and straining,

The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,

As over the barrier which bounded 55

His platform, and us who surrounded  
The barrier, they reached and they rested  
On space that might stand him in best stead:  
For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,  
The eruption of clatter and blaze meant, 60  
And if, in this minute of wonder,  
No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,  
Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,  
The lion at last was delivered?

Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead! 65  
And you saw by the flash on his forehead,  
By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,  
He was leagues in the desert already,  
Driving the flocks up the mountain,  
Or catlike couched hard by the fountain 70  
To waylay the date-gathering negress:  
So guarded he entrance or egress.

"How he stands!" quoth the King: "we may well  
swear

(No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere  
And so can afford the confession), 75  
We exercise wholesome discretion  
In keeping aloof from his threshold;  
Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,  
Their first would too pleasantly purloin  
The visitor's brisket or sirloin: 80  
But who 's he would prove so fool-hardy?  
Not the best man of Marignan, pardie!"

The sentence no sooner was uttered,  
Than over the rails a glove fluttered,  
Fell close to the lion, and rested: 85

The dame 't was, who flung it and jested  
 With life so, De Lorge had been wooing  
 For months past; he sat there pursuing  
 His suit, weighing out with nonchalance  
 Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

90

Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tarrier!  
 De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,  
 Walked straight to the glove,—while the lion  
 Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on  
 The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,  
 And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir,—  
 Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,  
 Leaped back where the lady was seated,  
 And full in the face of its owner  
 Flung the glove.

95

“Your heart's queen, you dethrone her?  
 So should I!”—cried the King—“'t was mere vanity,  
 Not love, set that task to humanity!”  
 Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing  
 From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

100

Not so, I; for I caught an expression  
 In her brow's undisturbed self-possession  
 Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment,—  
 As if from no pleasing experiment  
 She rose, yet of pain not much heedful  
 So long as the process was needful,—  
 As if she had tried, in a crucible,  
 To what “speeches like gold” were reducible,  
 And, finding the finest prove copper,

105

110

Felt the smoke in her face was but proper;  
To know what she had *not* to trust to, 115  
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.  
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter;  
Clement Marot stayed; I followed after,  
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant?  
If she wished not the rash deed's recallment? 120  
"For I"—so I spoke—"am a poet:  
Human nature—behoves that I know it!"

She told me, "Too long had I heard  
Of the deed proved alone by the word:  
For my love—what De Lorge would not dare! 125  
With my scorn—what De Lorge could compare!  
And the endless descriptions of death  
He would brave when my lip formed a breath,  
I must reckon as braved, or, of course,  
Doubt his word—and moreover, perforce, 130  
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,  
Must offer my love in return.  
When I looked on your lion, it brought  
All the dangers at once to my thought,  
Encountered by all sorts of men, 135  
Before he was lodged in his den,—  
From the poor slave whose club or bare hands  
Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,  
With no King and no Court to applaud,  
By no shame, should he shrink, overawed, 140  
Yet to capture the creature made shift,  
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,  
—To the page who last leaped o'er the fence  
Of the pit, on no greater pretence

Than to get back the bonnet he dropped, 145  
 Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.  
 So, wiser I judged it to make  
 One trial what 'death for my sake'  
 Really meant, while the power was yet mine,  
 Than to wait until time should define 150  
 Such a phrase not so simply as I,  
 Who took it to mean 'just to die.'  
 The blow a glove gives is but weak:  
 Does the mark yet discolor my cheek?  
 But when the heart suffers a blow, 155  
 Will the pain pass so soon, do you know?"

I looked, as away she was sweeping,  
 And saw a youth eagerly keeping  
 As close as he dared to the doorway.  
 No doubt that a noble should more weigh 160  
 His life than befits a plebeian;  
 And yet, had our brute been Nemean—  
 (I judge by a certain calm fervor  
 The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)  
 —He'd have scarce thought you did him the worst turn 165  
 If you whispered, "Friend, what you 'd get, first earn!"  
 And when, shortly after, she carried  
 Her shame from the Court, and they married,  
 To that marriage some happiness, maugre  
 The voice of the Court, I dared augur. 170

For De Lorge, he made women with men vie,  
 Those in wonder and praise, these in envy;  
 And in short stood so plain a head taller  
 That he wooed and won . . . how do you call her?



The beauty, that rose in the sequel 175  
To the King's love, who loved her a week well.  
And 't was noticed he never would honor  
De Lorge (who looked daggers upon her)  
With the easy commission of stretching  
His legs in the service, and fetching 180  
His wife, from her chamber, those straying  
Sad gloves she was always mislaying,  
While the King took the closet to chat in,—  
But of course this adventure came pat in.  
And never the King told the story, 185  
How bringing a glove brought such glory,  
But the wife smiled—"His nerves are grown firmer:  
Mine he brings now and utters no murmur."

*Venienti occurrere morbo!*

With which moral I drop my theorbo.

(1845).

# SAUL

## I

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,

Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.

And he: "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,

Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent

Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,  
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.

5

For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,

Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,

To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,

And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

10

## II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew

On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue

Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no wild  
 heat  
 Were now raging to torture the desert!"

## III

Then I, as was meet,  
 Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet, 15  
 And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent was  
 unlooped;  
 I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;  
 Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered  
 and gone,  
 That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on  
 Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more  
 I prayed, 20  
 And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid  
 But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice  
 replied.  
 At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon  
 I descried  
 A something more black than the blackness—the vast,  
 the upright  
 Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow into  
 sight 25  
 Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.  
 Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent roof, showed  
 Saul.

## IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched  
 out wide  
 On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to  
 each side;

He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his  
pangs

30

And waiting his change, the king serpent all heavily  
hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance  
come

With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark,  
blind and dumb.

## V

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine round  
its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those  
sunbeams like swords!

35

And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one  
after one,

So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they  
have fed

Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's  
bed;

And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows  
star

40

Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

## VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will  
each leave his mate

To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets  
elate

Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what  
has weight

To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand house— 45  
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half  
mouse!

God made all the creatures and gave them our love and  
our fear,

To give sign, we and they are his children, one family  
here.

## VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-  
song, when hand

Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and  
great hearts expand 50

And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then,  
the last song

When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear,  
bear him along

With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-  
seeds not here

To console us? The land has none left such as he on the  
bier.

Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then,  
the glad chaunt 55

Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she  
whom we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the  
great march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an  
arch

Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends?  
—Then, the chorus intoned

As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned. 60

But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

## VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened  
apart;  
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles  
'gan dart  
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a  
start,  
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at  
heart.  
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there  
erect.  
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,  
As I sang:—

65

## IX

“Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit  
feels waste,  
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.  
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to  
rock,  
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool  
silver shock  
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the  
bear,  
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.  
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust  
divine,  
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught  
of wine,  
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes  
tell

70

75

That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ

All the heart and the soul and the senses for ever in joy!  
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard

80

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung

The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue

Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest,

I have lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime, and all was for best'?

85

Then they sung through their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew

Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true:

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,

Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—

90

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine:

And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage  
(like the throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold  
go)

High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crown-  
ing them,—all

95

Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King  
Saul!”

## X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp  
and voice,

Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding re-  
joice

Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I  
say,

The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through  
its array,

100

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—“Saul!” cried I,  
and stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who  
hung propped

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck by  
his name.

Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right  
to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held  
(he alone,

105

While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a  
broad bust of stone

A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves  
grasp of the sheet?

Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to  
his feet,



And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your  
mountain of old,

With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—

110

Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow  
and scar

Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail,  
there they are!

—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the  
nest

Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on  
his crest

For their food in the ardors of summer. One long shud-  
der thrilled

115

All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was  
stilled

At the King's self left standing before me, released and  
aware.

What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt  
hope and despair;

Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile his  
right hand

Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant, forthwith  
to remand

120

To their place what new objects should enter: 't was Saul  
as before.

I looked up, and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt  
any more

Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from  
the shore,

At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow  
decline

Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and  
entwine

125

Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm  
folded arm

O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

## XI

What spell or what charm  
(For, awhile there was trouble within me), what next  
should I urge

To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song  
filled to the verge

His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields 130  
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond,  
on what fields,

Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the  
eye,

And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup  
they put by?

He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not: he lets me  
praise life,

Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

135

## XII

Then fancies grew rife  
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me  
the sheep

Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in  
sleep;

And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that  
might lie

'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill  
and the sky:

And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed  
 with my flocks, 140  
 Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and  
 the rocks,  
 Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the  
 show  
 Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall  
 know!  
 Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage  
 that gains,  
 And the prudence that keeps what men strive for!" And  
 now these old trains 145  
 Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once  
 more the string  
 Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

## XIII

"Yea, my King,"  
 I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that  
 spring  
 From the mere mortal life held in common by man and  
 by brute:  
 In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it  
 bears fruit. 150  
 Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem  
 trembled first  
 Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely  
 outburst  
 The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these  
 too, in turn  
 Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet  
 more was to learn,

E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our  
 dates shall we slight, 155  
 When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for  
 the plight  
 Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them?  
 Not so! stem and branch  
 Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-  
 wine shall stanch  
 Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such  
 wine.  
 Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be  
 thine! 160  
 By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still  
 shalt enjoy  
 More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life of a  
 boy.  
 Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed  
 thou hast done  
 Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the  
 sun  
 Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,  
 though tempests efface, 165  
 Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must every-  
 where trace  
 The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of  
 thy will,  
 Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall  
 thrill  
 Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor, till they too  
 give forth  
 A like cheer to their sons; who in turn, fill the South and  
 the North 170

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in  
the past!

But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last:  
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her  
height,

So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take  
flight.

No! Again a long draught of my soul-wine! Look forth  
o'er the years!

175

Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with  
the seer's!

Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—  
bid arise

A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square, till, built  
to the skies,

Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose  
fame would ye know?

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall  
go

180

In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so  
he did;

With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—  
For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised there! Which  
fault to amend,

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they  
shall spend

(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their praise, and  
record

185

With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's  
great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's  
a-wave

With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-winds rave:

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part

In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art!"

190

## XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant me that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,  
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and my sword

In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my word,—

Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavor

195

And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as ever

On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to save,

Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart

Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took part,

200

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,

And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like sleep!

For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves

The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and  
 Kidron retrieves  
 Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

205

## XV

I say then,—my song

While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and, ever more  
 strong,  
 Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly re-  
 sumed  
 His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand  
 replumed  
 His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the  
 swathes  
 Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his counte-  
 nance bathes,  
 He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as  
 of yore,  
 And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set  
 before.  
 He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent  
 The broad brow from the daily communion; and still,  
 though much spent  
 Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God  
 did choose,  
 To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite  
 lose.  
 So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile  
 Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned  
 there awhile,  
 And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop,  
 to raise

210

215

His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched  
on the praise 220  
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient  
there;  
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I  
was 'ware  
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast  
knees  
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak  
roots which please  
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to  
know 225  
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not,  
but slow  
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with  
care  
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow:  
through my hair  
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head,  
with kind power—  
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower. 230  
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scruti-  
nized mine—  
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was  
the sign?  
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a  
bliss,  
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and  
this;  
I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence, 235  
As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart  
to dispense!"



## XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song  
more! outbroke—

## XVII

“I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I  
spoke:

I, a work of God’s hand for that purpose, received in my  
brain

And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned  
him again

240

His creation’s approval or censure: I spoke as I saw,  
I report, as a man may of God’s work—all ’s love, yet  
all ’s law.

Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty  
tasked

To perceive him has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop  
was asked.

Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom  
laid bare.

245

Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the  
Infinite Care!

Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?

I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no  
less,

In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen  
God

In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the  
clod.

250

And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew  
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it  
too)

The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,

As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.

Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known, 255

I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.

There s a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,

I am fain to keep still in abeyance (I laugh as I think)

Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst

E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst! 260

But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake

God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.

—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,

Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?

In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all? 265

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,

That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,

And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can? 270

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous  
dower  
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a  
soul,  
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the  
whole?  
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest), 275  
These good things being given, to go on, and give one  
more, the best?  
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the  
height  
This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's  
minute of night?  
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,  
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him  
awake 280  
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find him-  
self set  
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new har-  
mony yet  
To be run and continued, and ended—who knows?—or  
endure!  
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to  
make sure;  
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified 285  
bliss,  
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles  
in this.

## XVIII

“I believe it! ’T is thou, God, that givest, ’t is I who re-  
ceive:  
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.

All 's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt  
to my prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the  
air.

290

From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy  
dread Sabaoth:

*I will?*—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth  
To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare  
Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my  
despair?

This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but  
what man Would do!

295

See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes  
fall through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to  
enrich,

To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing  
which,

I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through  
me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so  
wilt thou!

300

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost  
crown—

And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down  
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,  
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with  
death!

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved 305  
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!  
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall  
stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh,  
that I seek

In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall  
be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me, 310  
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like  
this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the  
Christ stand!"

## XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the  
night.

There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to  
right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the  
aware: 10  
314 5

I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly  
there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—  
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell  
loosed with her crews;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and  
shot

Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I  
fainted not, 320

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported,  
suppressed

All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy be-  
hest,

Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to  
rest.

At the dawn, all that trouble had withered from  
earth—

Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender  
birth;

325

In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills;  
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden  
wind-thrills;

In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye  
sidling still,

Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff  
and chill

That rose heavily as I approached them, made stupid with  
awe:

330

E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new  
law.

The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by  
the flowers;

The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved  
the vine-bowers:

And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent  
and low,

With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it  
is so!"

(1845-1855).

# LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

## I

WHERE the quiet-colored end of evening smiles  
Miles and miles  
On the solitary pastures where our sheep  
Half-asleep  
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop  
As they crop—  
Was the site once of a city great and gay  
(So they say),  
Of our country's very capital, its prince  
Ages since  
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far  
Peace or war.

10

## II

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,  
As you see,  
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills  
From the hills  
Intersect and give a name to (else they run  
Into one),  
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires  
Up like fires  
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall  
Bounding all,  
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,  
Twelve abreast.

15

20

## III

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass 25  
 Never was!  
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads  
 And embeds  
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,  
 Stock or stone— 30  
 Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe  
 Long ago;  
 Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame  
 Struck them tame;  
 And that glory and that shame alike, the gold 35  
 Bought and sold.

## IV

Now,—the single little turret that remains  
 On the plains,  
 By the caper overrooted, by the gourd  
 Overscored, 40  
 While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks  
 Through the chinks—  
 Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time  
 Sprang sublime,  
 And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced 45  
 As they raced,  
 And the monarch and his minions and his dames  
 Viewed the games.

## V

And I know—while thus the quiet-colored eve  
 Smiles to leave 50  
 To their folding, all our many tinkling fleece  
 In such peace,



And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray  
Melt away—

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair  
Waits me there

In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul  
For the goal,

When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,  
dumb

Till I come. 60

## VI

But he looked upon the city, every side,  
Far and wide,

All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades'  
Colonnades,

All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,  
All the men!

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,  
Either hand

On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace  
Of my face, 70

Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech  
Each on each.

## VII

In one year they sent a million fighters forth  
South and North,

And they built their gods a brazen pillar high  
As the sky, 75

Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—  
Gold, of course.

Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!  
Earth's returns 80

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!

Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!

Love is best.

(1855).

## EVELYN HOPE

### I

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead!

Sit and watch by her side an hour.

That is her book-shelf, this her bed;

She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,  
Beginning to die too, in the glass;

5

Little has yet been changed, I think:

The shutters are shut, no light may pass

Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

### II

Sixteen years old when she died!

Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;

10

It was not her time to love; beside,

Her life had many a hope and aim,

Duties enough and little cares,

And now was quiet, now astir,

Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—

15

And the sweet white brow is all of her.

### III

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?

What, your soul was pure and true,

The good stars met in your horoscope,

Made you of spirit, fire and dew—

20

And just because I was thrice as old  
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide,  
 Each was naught to each, must I be told?  
 We were fellow mortals, naught beside?

## IV

No, indeed! for God above 25  
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,  
 And creates the love to reward the love:  
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake!  
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,  
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few: 30  
 Much is to learn, much to forget  
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

## V

But the time will come,—at last it will,  
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)  
 In the lower earth in the years long still, 35  
 That body and soul so pure and gay?  
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,  
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red—  
 And what you would do with me, in fine,  
 In the new life come in the old one's stead. 40

## VI

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,  
 Given up myself so many times,  
 Gained me the gains of various men,  
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;

Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope, 45  
Either I missed or itself missed me:  
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!  
What is the issue? let us see!

## VII

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.  
My heart seemed full as it could hold; 50  
There was place and to spare for the frank young  
smile,  
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young  
gold.  
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep:  
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!  
There, that is our secret: go to sleep! 55  
You will wake, and remember, and understand.  
(1855).

# UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY)

## I

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,  
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city  
square;

Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window  
there!

## II

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at  
least!

There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast;  
While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than  
a beast.

## III

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull  
Just on a mountain edge as bare as the creature's skull,  
Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!  
—I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned  
wool.

## IV

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses!  
Why?

They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something  
to take the eye!

Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry;  
 You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who  
   hurries by;  
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun  
   gets high;  
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted  
   properly.

15

## V

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by  
   rights,  
 'T is May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well  
   off the heights:  
 You 've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen  
   steam and wheeze,  
 And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive  
   trees.

20

## VI

Is it better in May, I ask you? You 've summer all at  
   once;  
 In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns.  
 'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three  
   fingers well,  
 The wild tulip, at end of its tube, blows out its great red  
   bell  
 Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick  
   and sell.

25

## VII

Is it ever hot in the square? There 's a fountain to spout  
   and splash!  
 In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-  
   bows flash

On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and  
 paddle and pash  
 Round the lady atop in her conch—fifty gazers do not  
 abash,  
 Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist  
 in a sort of sash.

30

## VIII

All the year long at the villa, nothing to see though you  
 linger,  
 Except yon cypress that points like death's lean lifted  
 forefinger.  
 Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix i' the corn and  
 mingle,  
 Or thrid the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem  
 a-tingle.  
 Late August or early September, the stunning cicada is  
 shrill,  
 And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resin-  
 ous firs on the hill.  
 Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the  
 fever and chill.

35

## IX

Ere you open your eyes in the city, the blessed church  
 bells begin:  
 No sooner the bells leave off than the diligence rattles in:  
 You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a  
 pin.  
 By and by there 's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets  
 blood, draws teeth;  
 Or the Pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market be-  
 neath.

40



At the post-office such a scene-picture—the new play,  
 piping hot!

And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves  
 were shot.

Above it, behold the Archbishop's most fatherly of re-  
 bukes,

45

And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new  
 law of the Duke's!

Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don  
 So-and-so,

Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, St. Jerome and  
 Cicero,

“And moreover” (the sonnet goes rhyming), “the  
 skirts of St. Paul has reached,

Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctu-  
 ous than ever he preached.”

50

Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession! our Lady  
 borne smiling and smart

With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords  
 stuck in her heart!

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife;  
 No keeping one's haunches still: it's the greatest pleas-  
 ure in life.

## X

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear! fowls, wine, at double  
 the rate.

55

They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil  
 pays passing the gate

It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not  
 the city!

Beggars can scarcely be choosers: but still—ah, the pity,  
 the pity!

Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with  
cowls and sandals,

And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the  
yellow candles;

60

One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross  
with handles,

And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better  
prevention of scandals:

*Bang-whang-whang* goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.

Oh, a day in the city square, there is no such pleasure  
in life!

(1855).

## A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

### I

LET'S contend no more, Love,  
Strive nor weep:  
All be as before, Love,  
—Only sleep!

### II

What so wild as words are? 5  
I and thou  
In debate, as birds are,  
Hawk on bough!

### III

See the creature stalking 10  
While we speak!  
Hush and hide the talking,  
Cheek on cheek.

### IV

What so false as truth is,  
False to thee?  
Where the serpent's tooth is 15  
Shun the tree—

## V

Where the apple reddens  
Never pry—  
Lest we lose our Edens,  
Eye and I.

20

## VI

Be a god and hold me  
With a charm!  
Be a man and fold me  
With thine arm!

## VII

Teach me, only teach, Love!  
As I ought  
I will speak thy speech, Love,  
Think thy thought—

25

## VIII

Meet, if thou require it,  
Both demands,  
Laying flesh and spirit  
In thy hands.

30

## IX

That shall be to-morrow,  
Not to-night:  
I must bury sorrow  
Out of sight:

35

## X

—Must a little weep, Love,  
    (Foolish me!),  
And so fall asleep, Love,  
    Loved by thee.

(1855)

## A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

### I

OH Galuppi, Baldassare, this is very sad to find!  
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf  
and blind;  
But although I take your meaning, 't is with such a heavy  
mind!

### II

Here you come with your old music, and here 's all the  
good it brings.  
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants  
were the kings,  
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea  
with rings?

5

### III

Ay, because the sea 's the street there; and 't is arched by  
. . . what you call  
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it, where they kept  
the carnival:  
I was never out of England—it 's as if I saw it all.

### IV

Did young people take their pleasure when the sea was  
warm in May?

10

Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-  
day,  
When they made up fresh adventures for the morrow, do  
you say?

## V

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round and lips so red,—  
On her neck the small face buoyant, like a bell-flower on  
its bed,  
O'er the breast's superb abundance where a man might  
base his head?

15

## VI

Well, and it was graceful of them—they'd break talk off  
and afford  
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet—he, to finger on  
his sword,  
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately at the clavi-  
chord?

## VII

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths dimin-  
ished, sigh on sigh,  
Told them something? Those suspensions, those solu-  
tions—"Must we die?"  
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life might last! we  
can but try!"

20

## VIII

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still as  
happy?"—"Yes. And you?"  
—"Then, more kisses!"—"Did *I* stop them, when a  
million seemed so few?"  
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must be answered  
to!

## IX

So, an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you,  
I dare say!

25

“Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave  
and gay!

I can always leave off talking when I hear a master play!”

## X

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one  
by one,

Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds  
as well undone,

Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never  
see the sun.

30

## XI

But when I sit down to reason, think to take my stand  
nor swerve,

While I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close  
reserve,

In you come with your cold music till I creep through  
every nerve.

## XII

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking where a house  
was burned:

“Dust and ashes, dead and done with, Venice spent what  
Venice earned.

35

The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a soul can be  
discerned.

## XIII

“Yours for instance: you know physics, something of  
geology,



Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall rise in their  
degree;  
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you 'll not die, it cannot be!

## XIV

“As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom  
and drop,  
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly  
were the crop:  
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to  
stop?

## XV

“Dust and ashes!” So you creak it, and I want the  
heart to scold.  
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what 's become  
of all the gold  
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and  
grown old.

(1855).

## MY STAR

ALL that I know

Of a certain star

Is, it can throw

(Like the angled spar)

Now a dart of red,

5

Now a dart of blue;

Till my friends have said

They would fain see, too,

My star that dartles the red and the blue!

Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled: 10

They must solace themselves with the Saturn  
above it.

What matter to me if their star is a world?

Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.  
(1855).

## INSTANS TYRANNUS

### I

OF the million or two, more or less,  
I rule and possess,  
One man, for some cause undefined,  
Was least to my mind.

### II

I struck him, he grovelled of course— 5  
For, what was his force?  
I pinned him to earth with my weight  
And persistence of hate;  
And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,  
As his lot might be worse. 10

### III

“Were the object less mean, would he stand  
At the swing of my hand!  
For obscurity helps him and blots  
The hole where he squats.”  
So, I set my five wits on the stretch 15  
To inveigle the wretch.  
All in vain! Gold and jewels I threw,  
Still he couched there perdue;  
I tempted his blood and his flesh,

Hid in roses my mesh, 20  
 Choicest cates and the flagon's best spilth:  
 Still he kept to his filth.

## IV

Had he kith now or kin, were access  
 To his heart, did I press:  
 Just a son or a mother to seize! 25  
 No such booty as these.  
 Were it simply a friend to pursue  
 'Mid my million or two,  
 Who could pay me in person or pelf  
 What he owes me himself! 30  
 No: I could not but smile through my chafe:  
 For the fellow lay safe  
 As his mates do, the midge and the nit,  
 —Through minuteness, to wit.

## V

Then a humor more great took its place 35  
 At the thought of his face,  
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,  
 The trouble uncouth  
 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain  
 To put out of its pain. 40  
 And, "no!" I admonished myself,  
 "Is one mocked by an elf,  
 Is one baffled by toad or by rat?  
 The gravamen 's in that!  
 How the lion, who crouches to suit 45  
 His back to my foot,  
 Would admire that I stand in debate!

But the small turns the great  
If it vexes you,—that is the thing!  
Toad or rat vex the king? 50  
Though I waste half my realm to unearth  
Toad or rat, 't is well worth!"

## VI

So, I soberly laid my last plan  
To extinguish the man.  
Round his creep-hole, with never a break 55  
Ran my fires for his sake;  
Over-head, did my thunder combine  
With my underground mine:  
Till I looked from my labor content  
To enjoy the event. 60  
When sudden . . . how think ye, the end?  
Did I say "without friend"?  
Say rather, from marge to blue marge  
The whole sky grew his targe  
With the sun's self for visible boss, 65  
While an Arm ran across  
Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast  
Where the wretch was safe prest!  
Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,  
The man sprang to his feet, 70  
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!  
—So, *I* was afraid!

(1855).

## A PRETTY WOMAN

### I

THAT fawn-skin-dappled hair of hers,  
And the blue eye  
Dear and dewy,  
And that infantine fresh air of hers!

### II

To think men cannot take you, Sweet,  
And enfold you,  
Ay, and hold you,  
And so keep you what they make you, Sweet!

5

### III

You like us for a glance, you know—  
For a word's sake  
Or a sword's sake,  
All's the same, whate'er the chance, you know.

10

### IV

And in turn we make you ours, we say—  
You and youth too,  
Eyes and mouth too,  
All the face composed of flowers, we say.

15

## V

All 's our own, to make the most of, Sweet—  
Sing and say for,  
Watch and pray for,  
Keep a secret or go boast of, Sweet!

20

## VI

But for loving, why, you would not, Sweet,  
Though we prayed you,  
Paid you, brayed you  
In a mortar—for you could not, Sweet!

## VII

So, we leave the sweet face fondly there;  
Be its beauty  
Its sole duty!  
Let all hope of grace beyond, lie there!

25

## VIII

And while the face lies quiet there,  
Who shall wonder  
That I ponder  
A conclusion? I will try it there.

30

## IX

As,—why must one, for the love foregone,  
Scout mere liking?  
Thunder-striking  
Earth,—the heaven, we looked above for, gone!

35

## X

Why, with beauty, needs there money be,  
Love with liking?  
Crush the fly-king  
In his gauze, because no honey-bee?

40

## XI

May not liking be so simple-sweet,  
If love grew there  
'T would undo there  
All that breaks the cheek to dimples sweet?

## XII

Is the creature too imperfect, say?  
Would you mend it  
And so end it?  
Since not all addition perfects aye.

45

## XIII

Or is it of its kind, perhaps,  
Just perfection—  
Whence, rejection  
Of a grace not to its mind, perhaps?

50

## XIV

Shall we burn up, tread that face at once  
Into tinder,  
And so hinder  
Sparks from kindling all the place at once?

55



## XV

Or else kiss away one's soul on her?  
Your love-fancies!  
—A sick man sees  
Truer, when his hot eyes roll on her!

60

## XVI

Thus the craftsman thinks to grace the rose,—  
Plucks a mould-flower  
For his gold flower,  
Uses fine things that efface the rose:

## XVII

Rosy rubies make its cup more rose,  
Precious metals  
Ape the petals,—  
Last, some old king locks it up, morose!

65

## XVIII

Then how grace a rose? I know a way!  
Leave it, rather.  
Must you gather?  
Smell, kiss, wear it—at last, throw away!

70

(1855).

# THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

## I

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 't is so,  
Since now at length my fate I know,  
Since nothing all my love avails,  
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,  
    Since this was written and needs must be— 5  
My whole heart rises up to bless  
Your name in pride and thankfulness!  
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim  
Only a memory of the same,  
—And this beside, if you will not blame, 10  
    Your leave for one more last ride with me.

## II

My mistress bent that brow of hers;  
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs  
When pity would be softening through,  
Fixed me a breathing-while or two 15  
    With life or death in the balance: right!  
The blood replenished me again;  
My last thought was at least not vain:  
I and my mistress, side by side  
Shall be together, breathe and ride, 20  
So, one day more am I deified.  
    Who knows but the world may end to-night?

## III

Hush! if you saw some western cloud  
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed  
By many benedictions—sun's 25  
And moon's and evening-star's at once—  
And so, you, looking and loving best,  
Conscious grew, your passion drew  
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,  
Down on you, near and yet more near, 30  
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—  
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!  
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

## IV

Then we began to ride. My soul  
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll 35  
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.  
Past hopes already lay behind.  
What need to strive with a life awry?  
Had I said that, had I done this,  
So might I gain, so might I miss. 40  
Might she have loved me? just as well  
She might have hated, who can tell!  
Where had I been now if the worst befell?  
And here we are riding, she and I.

## V

Fail I alone, in words and deeds? 45  
Why, all men strive, and who succeeds?  
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,  
Saw other regions, cities new,  
As the world rushed by on either side.

I thought,—All labor, yet no less 50  
 Bear up beneath their unsuccess.  
 Look at the end of work, contrast  
 The petty done, the undone vast,  
 This present of theirs with the hopeful past!  
 I hoped she would love me; here we ride. 55

## VI

What hand and brain went ever paired?  
 What heart alike conceived and dared?  
 What act proved all its thought had been?  
 What will but felt the fleshly screen?  
 We ride and I see her bosom heave. 60  
 There's many a crown for who can reach.  
 Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!  
 The flag stuck on a heap of bones,  
 A soldier's doing! what atones?  
 They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones. 65  
 My riding is better, by their leave.

## VII

What does it all mean, poet? Well,  
 Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell  
 What we felt only; you expressed  
 You hold things beautiful the best, 70  
 And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.  
 'T is something, nay 't is much: but then,  
 Have you yourself what 's best for men?  
 Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—  
 Nearer one whit your own sublime 75  
 Than we who never have turned a rhyme?  
 Sing, riding 's a joy! For me, I ride.

## VIII

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave  
A score of years to Art, her slave, .  
And that 's your Venus, whence we turn 80  
To yonder girl that fords the burn!  
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?  
What, man of music, you grown gray  
With notes and nothing else to say,  
Is this your sole praise from a friend, 85  
“Greatly his opera's strains intend,  
But in music we know how fashions end!”  
I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

## IX

Who knows what 's fit for us? Had fate  
Proposed bliss here should sublimate 90  
My being—had I signed the bond—  
Still one must lead some life beyond,  
Have a bliss to die with, dim-described.  
This foot once planted on the goal,  
This glory-garland round my soul, 95  
Could I descry such? Try and test!  
I sink back shuddering from the quest.  
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?  
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

## X

And yet—she has not spoke so long! 100  
What if heaven be that, fair and strong  
At life's best, with our eyes upturned  
Whither life's flower is first discerned,  
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?

What if we still ride on, we two,  
With life for ever old yet new,  
Changed not in kind but in degree,  
The instant made eternity,—  
And heaven just prove that I and she  
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

105

(1855).

# THE PATRIOT

## AN OLD STORY

### I

It was roses, roses, all the way,  
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad:  
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,  
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,  
A year ago on this very day.

5

### II

The air broke into a mist with bells,  
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.  
Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels—  
But give me your sun from yonder skies!"  
They had answered, "And afterward, what else?"

10

### III

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun  
To give it my loving friends to keep!  
Naught man could do, have I left undone:  
And you see my harvest, what I reap  
This very day, now a year is run.

15

### IV

There 's nobody on the house-tops now—  
Just a palsied few at the windows set;

For the best of the sight is, all allow,  
At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,  
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

20

## V

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,  
A rope cuts both my wrists behind;  
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,  
For they fling, whoever has a mind,  
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

25

## VI

Thus I entered, and thus I go!  
In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.  
"Paid by the world, what dost thou owe  
Me?"—God might question; now instead,  
'T is God shall repay: I am safer so.

(1855).



## MEMORABILIA

### I

Al, did you once see Shelley plain,  
And did he stop and speak to you,  
And did you speak to him again?  
How strange it seems and new!

### II

But you were living before that, 5  
And also you are living after;  
And the memory I started at—  
My starting moves your laughter!

### III

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own  
And a certain use in the world no doubt, 10  
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone  
'Mid the blank miles round about:

### IV

For there I picked up on the heather  
And there I put inside my breast  
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather! 15  
Well, I forget the rest.

(1855).

## ANDREA DEL SARTO

CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER"

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,  
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:  
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?  
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear, 5  
Treat his own subject after his own way,  
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
And shut the money into this small hand  
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?  
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love! 10  
I often am much wearier than you think,  
This evening more than usual, and it seems  
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit  
Here by the window with your hand in mine  
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole, 15  
Both of one mind, as married people use,  
Quietly, quietly the evening through,  
I might get up to-morrow to my work  
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.  
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this! 20  
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,  
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.  
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve  
For each of the five pictures we require:

It saves a model. So! keep looking so— 25  
My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds!  
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,  
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—  
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,  
Which everybody looks on and calls his, 30  
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,  
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.  
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,  
There's what we painters call our harmony!  
A common grayness silvers everything,— 35  
All in a twilight, you and I alike  
—You, at the point of your first pride in me  
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;  
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down  
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40  
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;  
That length of convent-wall across the way  
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;  
The last monk leaves the garden: days decrease,  
And autumn grows, autumn in everything. 45  
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.  
How strange now looks the life he makes us lead; 50  
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!  
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!  
This chamber for example—turn your head—  
All that's behind us! You don't understand  
Nor care to understand about my art, 55  
But you can hear at least when people speak:

And that cartoon, the second from the door  
—It is the thing, Love! so such thing should be—  
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.  
I can do with my pencil what I know, 60  
What I see, what at bottom of my heart  
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—  
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,  
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,  
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week, 65  
And just as much they used to say in France.  
At any rate, 't is easy, all of it!  
No sketches first, no studies, that 's long past:  
I do what many dream of all their lives,  
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do, 70  
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,  
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive  
To paint a little thing like that you smeared  
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,— 75  
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,  
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!  
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.  
There burns a truer light of God in them,  
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain, 80  
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.  
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,  
Enter and take their place there sure enough, 85  
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.  
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.  
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—

Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.  
I, painting from myself, and to myself, 90  
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame  
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,  
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that? 95  
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?  
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray  
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!  
I know both what I want and what might gain, 100  
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh  
"Had I been two, another and myself,  
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.  
Yonder 's a work now, of that famous youth  
The Urbinate who died five years ago. 105  
( 'T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)  
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,  
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,  
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,  
Above and through his art—for it gives way; 110  
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—  
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,  
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,  
He means right—that, a child may understand.  
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it: 115  
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—  
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?  
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,  
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!  
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think— 120

More than I merit, yes, by many times.  
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,  
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,  
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird  
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare— 125  
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!  
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged  
“God and the glory! never care for gain.  
The present by the future, what is that?  
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo! 130  
Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!”  
I might have done it for you. So it seems:  
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.  
Beside, incentives come from the soul's self;  
The rest avail not. Why do I need you? 135  
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?  
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;  
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:  
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—  
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140  
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
’T is safer for me, if the award be strict,  
That I am something underrated here,  
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, 145  
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
The best is when they pass and look aside;  
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.  
Well may they speak! That Francis, that first time,  
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau! 150  
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,  
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,

In that humane great monarch's golden look,—  
One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile 155  
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,  
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,  
I painting proudly with his breath on me,  
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,  
Such frank French eyes, and such 'a fire of souls 160  
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—  
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,  
This in the background, waiting on my work,  
To crown the issue with a last reward!  
A good time, was it not, my kingly days? 165  
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—  
'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said;  
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,  
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt  
Out of his grange whose four walls make his world. 170  
How could it end in any other way?  
You called me, and I came home to your heart.  
The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since  
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?  
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, 175  
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!  
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;  
The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—  
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180  
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows  
My better fortune, I resolve to think.  
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,  
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,

- To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . . 185  
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,  
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)  
 "Friend, there 's a certain sorry little scrub  
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190  
 Who, were he set to plan and execute  
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,  
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"  
 To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.  
 I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see, 195  
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!  
 Ay, but the soul! he 's Rafael! rub it out!  
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth  
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?  
 Do you forget already words like those?), 200  
 If really there was such a chance, so lost,—  
 Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.  
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!  
 This hour has been an hour! Another smile?  
 If you would sit thus by me every night 205  
 I should work better, do you comprehend?  
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.  
 See, it is settled dusk now; there 's a star;  
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,  
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210  
 Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,  
 Inside the melancholy little house  
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.  
 King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights  
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, 215  
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick



Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,  
That gold of his I did cement them with!  
Let us but love each other. Must you go?  
That Cousin here again? he wait's outside? 220  
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?  
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?  
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?  
While hand and eye and something of a heart  
Are left me, work 's my ware, and what 's it worth? 225  
I 'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
The gray remainder of the evening out,  
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly  
How I could paint, were I but back in France,  
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face, 230  
Not yours this time! I want you at my side  
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—  
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.  
I take the subjects for his corridor, 235  
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,  
And throw him in another thing or two  
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough  
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,  
What 's better and what 's all I care about, 240  
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!  
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,  
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.  
I regret little, I would change still less. 245  
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?  
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true

I took his coin, was tempted and complied,  
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.  
My father and my mother died of want. 250  
Well, had I riches of my own? you see  
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.  
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:  
And I have labored somewhat in my time  
And not been paid profusely. Some good son 255  
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!  
No doubt, there 's something strikes a balance. Yes,  
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.  
This must suffice me here. What would one have?  
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance— 260  
Four great walls in the new Jerusalem,  
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me  
To cover—the three first without a wife,  
While I have mine! So—still they overcome 265  
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

(1855).

## “DE GUSTIBUS—”

### I

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees  
    (If our loves remain),  
    In an English lane,  
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.  
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice— 5  
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,  
    Making love, say,—  
    The happier they!  
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,  
And let them pass, as they will too soon, 10  
    With the beanflowers' boon,  
    And the blackbird's tune,  
    And May, and June!

### II

What I love best in all the world  
Is a castle, precipice-encurled, 15  
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.  
Or look for me, old fellow of mine  
    (If I get my head from out the mouth  
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,  
And come again to the land of lands)— 20  
In a sea-side house to the farther South,  
Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,

And one sharp tree—'t is a cypress—stands,  
By the many hundred years red-rusted,  
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted, 25  
My sentinel to guard the sands  
To the water's edge. For, what expands  
Before the house, but the great opaque  
Blue breadth of sea without a break?  
While, in the house, for ever crumbles 30  
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,  
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.  
A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles  
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,  
And says there's news to-day—the king 35  
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,  
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:  
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.  
Italy, my Italy!  
Queen Mary's saying serves for me— 40  
    (When fortune's malice  
    Lost her, Calais)—  
Open my heart and you will see  
Graved inside of it, "Italy."  
Such lovers old are I and she: 45  
So it always was, so shall ever be!

(1855).

# THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL

## A PICTURE AT FANO

### I

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave  
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!  
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve  
Shall find performed thy special ministry,  
And time come for departure, thou, suspending, 5  
Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,  
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

### II

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,  
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,  
—And suddenly my head is covered o'er 10  
With those wings, white above the child who prays  
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding  
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding  
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

### III

I would not look up thither past thy head 15  
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,  
For I should have thy gracious face instead,  
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low

Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,  
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether 20  
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread?

## IV

If this was ever granted, I would rest  
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands  
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,  
Pressing the brain, which too much thought ex- 25  
pands,  
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing  
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,  
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

## V

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!  
I think how I should view the earth and skies 30  
And sea, when once again my brow was bared  
After thy healing, with such different eyes.  
O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:  
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.  
What further may be sought for or declared? 35

## VI

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach  
(Alfred, dear friend!)—that little child to pray,  
Holding the little hands up, each to each  
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away  
Over the earth where so much lay before him 40  
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,  
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

## VII

We were at Fano, and three times we went  
To sit and see him in his chapel there,  
And drink his beauty to our soul's content 45  
—My angel with me too: and since I care  
For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power  
And glory comes this picture for a dower,  
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

## VIII

And since he did not work thus earnestly 50  
At all times, and has else endured some wrong—  
I took one thought his picture struck from me,  
And spread it out, translating it to song.  
My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?  
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end? 55  
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea. •

(1855).

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,  
Singing together.  
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes  
Each in its tether  
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain, 5  
Cared-for till cock-crow:  
Look out if yonder be not day again  
Rimming the rock-row!  
That 's the appropriate country; there, man's thought,  
Rarer, intenser, 10  
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
Chafes in the censer.  
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;  
Seek we sepulture  
On a tall mountain, citied to the top, 15  
Crowded with culture!  
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;  
Clouds overcome it;  
No! yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
Circling its summit. 20  
Thither our path lies; wind we up the heights:  
Wait ye the warning?  
Our low life was the level's and the night's;  
He 's for the morning.



- Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head, 25  
    'Ware the beholders!  
This is our master, famous calm and dead,  
    Borne on our shoulders.
- Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,  
    Safe from the weather! 30  
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,  
    Singing together,  
He was a man born with thy face and throat,  
    Lyric Apollo!  
Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note 35  
    Winter would follow?  
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!  
    Cramped and diminished,  
Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!  
    My dance is finished" ? 40  
No, that's the world's way: (keep the mountain-side,  
    Make for the city!)  
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride  
    Over men's pity;  
Left play for work, and grappled with the world 45  
    Bent on escaping:  
"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?  
    Show me their shaping,  
Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—  
    Give!"—So, he gowned him, 50  
Straight got by heart that book to its last page:  
    Learned, we found him.  
Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,  
    Accents uncertain:  
"Time to taste life," another would have said, 55

“Up with the curtain!”

This man said rather, “Actual life comes next?

Patience a moment!

Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,

Still there 's the comment.

60

Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,

Painful or easy!

Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,

Ay, nor feel queasy.”

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,

65

When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to give!

Sooner, he spurned it.

Image the whole, then execute the parts—

Fancy the fabric

70

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,

Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached; there's the market-  
place

Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace

75

(Hearten our chorus!)

That before living he'd learn how to live—

No end to learning:

Earn the means first—God surely will contrive

Use for our earning.

80

Others mistrust and say, “But time escapes:

Live now or never!”

He said, “What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!

Man has Forever.”

Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:

85

*Calculus* racked him:

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead:

*Tussis* attacked him.

“Now, master, take a little rest!”—not he!

(Caution redoubled,

90

Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)

Not a whit troubled

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,

Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)

95

Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure

Bad is our bargain!

100

Was it not great? did not he throw on God

(He loves the burthen)—

God's task to make the heavenly period

Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear

105

Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,

Paid by instalment.

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success

Found, or earth's failure:

110

“Wilt thou trust death or not?” He answered “Yes:

Hence with life's pale lure!”

That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it:

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,

115

Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred 's soon hit:  
 This high man, aiming at a million,  
     Misses an unit. 120  
 That, has the world here—should he need the next,  
     Let the world mind him!  
 This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed  
     Seeking shall find Him.  
 So, with the throttling hands of death at strife, 125  
     Ground he at grammar;  
 Still, through the rattle, parts of speech were rife:  
     While he could stammer  
 He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—  
     Properly based *Oun*— 130  
 Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,  
     Dead from the waist down.  
 Well, here's the platform, here 's the proper place:  
     Hail to your purlieus,  
 All ye highfliers of the feathered race, 135  
     Swallows and curlews!  
 Here's the top-peak; the multitude below  
     Live, for they can, there:  
 This man decided not to Live but Know—  
     Bury this man there? 140  
 Here—here's his place; where meteors shoot, clouds  
     form,  
     Lightnings are loosened,  
 Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,  
     Peace let the dew send!  
 Lofty designs must close in like effects: 145  
     Loftily lying,  
 Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,  
     Living and dying. (1855).

## ONE WAY OF LOVE

### I

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.  
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves  
And strew them where Pauline may pass.  
She will not turn aside? Alas!  
Let them lie. Suppose they die?  
The chance was they might take her eye.

5

### II

How many a month I strove to suit  
These stubborn fingers to the lute!  
To-day I venture all I know.  
She will not hear my music? So!  
Break the string; fold music's wing:  
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

10

### III

My whole life long I learned to love.  
This hour my utmost art I prove  
And speak my passion—heaven or hell?  
She will not give me heaven? 'T is well!  
Lose who may—I still can say,  
Those who win heaven, blest are they!

15

(1855).

# ONE WORD MORE

TO E. B. B.

## I

THERE they are, my fifty men and women  
Naming me the fifty poems finished!  
Take them, Love, the book and me together:  
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

## II

Rafael made a century of sonnets, 5  
Made and wrote them in a certain volume  
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil  
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:  
These, the world might view—but one, the volume,  
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you. 10  
Did she live and love it all her lifetime?  
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,  
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow  
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,  
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving— 15  
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,  
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

## III

You and I would rather read that volume  
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)

Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael, 20  
Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—  
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,  
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,  
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—  
Seen by us and all the world in circle. 25

## IV

You and I will never read that volume.  
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple,  
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.  
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna  
Cried, and the world cried too, "Ours, the treasure!" 30  
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

## V

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:  
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."  
While he mused and traced it and retraced it  
(Peradventure with a pen corroded 35  
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,  
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,  
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,  
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,  
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle, 40  
Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—  
Dante, who loved well because he hated,  
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,  
Dante, standing, studying his angel,—  
In there broke the folk of his Inferno. 45  
Says he—"Certain people of importance"

(Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)  
 "Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."  
 Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

## VI

You and I would rather see that angel, 50  
 Painted by the tenderness of Dante,  
 Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

## VII

You and I will never see that picture.  
 While he mused on love and Beatrice,  
 While he softened o'er his outlined angel, 55  
 In they broke, those "people of importance"  
 We and Bice bear the loss forever.

## VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?  
 This: no artist lives and loves, that longs not  
 Once, and only once, and for one only 60  
 (Ah, the prize!), to find his love a language  
 Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—  
 Using nature that's an art to others,  
 Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.  
 Ay, of all the artists living, loving, 65  
 None but would forego his proper dowry,—  
 Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,  
 Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,—  
 Put to proof art alien to the artist's,  
 Once, and only once, and for one only, 70  
 So to be the man and leave the artist,  
 Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.



## IX

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!

He who smites the rock and spreads the water,

Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,

75

Even he, the minute makes immortal,

Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute,

Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.

While he smites, how can he but remember,

So he smote before, in such a peril,

80

When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help  
us?"

When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"

When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,

Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant."

Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;

85

Thus the doing savors of disrelish;

Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;

O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,

Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.

For he bears an ancient wrong about him,

90

Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,

Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—

"How shouldst thou, of all men, smite, and save us?"

Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—

"Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

95

## X

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!

Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,

Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.

Never dares the man put off the prophet.

## XI

Did he love one face from out the thousands 100  
 (Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,  
 Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave),  
 He would envy yon dumb, patient camel,  
 Keeping a reserve of scanty water  
 Meant to save his own life in the desert; 105  
 Ready in the desert to deliver  
 (Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)  
 Hoard and life together for his mistress.

## XII

I shall never, in the years remaining,  
 Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues, 110  
 Make you music that should all-express me;  
 So it seems: I stand on my attainment.  
 This of verse alone, one life allows me;  
 Verse and nothing else have I to give you.  
 Other heights in other lives, God willing: 115  
 All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

## XIII

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—  
 Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.  
 Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,  
 Lines I write the first time and the last time. 120  
 He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,  
 Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,  
 Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,  
 Makes a strange art of an art familiar,  
 Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets. 125

He who blows through bronze may breathe through  
silver,  
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.  
He who writes, may write for once as I do.

## XIV

Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy, 130  
Enter each and all, and use their service,  
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.  
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,  
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:  
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's, 135  
Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty.  
Let me speak this once in my true person,  
Not as Lippo, Roland, or Andrea,  
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence.  
Pray you, look on these my men and women, 140  
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;  
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!  
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

## XV

Not but that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!  
Here in London, yonder late in Florence, 145  
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.  
Curving on a sky imbrued with color,  
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,  
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.  
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato, 150  
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,  
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.  
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,

Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,  
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver, 155  
 Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

## XVI

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?  
 Nay: for if that moon could love a mortal,  
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy),  
 All her magic ('t is the old sweet mythos), 160  
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,  
 Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—  
 Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,  
 Blind to Galileo on his turret,  
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even! 165  
 Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—  
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,  
 Opens out anew for worse or better!  
 Proves she like some portent of an iceberg  
 Swimming full upon the ship it founders, 170  
 Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?  
 Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire,  
 Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?  
 Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu  
 Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest, 175  
 Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.  
 Like the bodied heaven in his clearness  
 Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,  
 When they ate and drank and saw God also!

## XVII

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know. 180  
 Only this is sure—the sight were other,

Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,  
 Dying now impoverished here in London.  
 God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures  
 Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with, 185  
 One to show a woman when he loves her!

## XVIII

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!  
 This to you—yourself my moon of poets!  
 Ah, but that 's the world's side, there 's the wonder,  
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you! 190  
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—  
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.  
 But the best is when I glide from out them,  
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,  
 Come out on the other side, the novel 195  
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,  
 Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

## XIX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,  
 Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,  
 Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it, 200  
 Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!

R. B. (1855).

## RABBI BEN EZRA

### I

GROW old along with me!  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made:  
Our times are in his hand  
Who saith "A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor  
be afraid!"

5

### II

Not that, amassing flowers,  
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,  
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"  
Not that, admiring stars,  
It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;  
Mine be some figured flame which blends, tran-  
scends them all!"

10

### III

Not for such hopes and fears  
Annulling youth's brief years,  
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!  
Rather I prize the doubt  
Low kinds exist without,  
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

15

## IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
Were man but formed to feed 20  
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast;  
Such feasting ended, then  
As sure an end to men;  
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the  
maw-crammed beast?

## V

Rejoice we are allied 25  
To That which doth provide  
And not partake, effect and not receive!  
A spark disturbs our clod;  
Nearer we hold of God  
Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must  
believe. 30

## VI

Then, welcome each rebuff  
That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!  
Be our joys three-parts pain!  
Strive, and hold cheap the strain; 35  
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never  
grudge the throe!

## VII

For thence,—a paradox  
Which comforts while it mocks,—  
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:  
What I aspired to be, 40

And was not, comforts me:  
 A brute I might have been, but would not sink  
     i' the scale.

## VIII

What is he but a brute  
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,  
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want  
     play? 45  
 To man, propose this test—  
 Thy body at its best,  
 How far can that project thy soul on its lone  
     way?

## IX

Yet gifts should prove their use:  
 I own the Past profuse 50  
 Of power each side, perfection every turn:  
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
 Brain treasured up the whole;  
 Should not the heart beat once "How good to  
     live and learn"?

## X

Not once beat "Praise be thine! 55  
 I see the whole design,  
 I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:  
 Perfect I call thy plan:  
 Thanks that I was a man!  
 Maker, remake, complete,—I trust what thou  
     shalt do!" 60



## XI

For pleasant is this flesh;  
Our soul, in its rose-mesh  
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:  
Would we some prize might hold  
To match those manifold 65  
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did  
best!

## XII

Let us not always say,  
“Spite of this flesh to-day  
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the  
whole!”  
As the bird wings and sings, 70  
Let us cry, “All good things  
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than  
flesh helps soul!”

## XIII

Therefore I summon age  
To grant youth's heritage,  
Life's struggle having so far reached its term: 75  
Thence shall I pass, approved  
A man, for aye removed  
From the developed brute; a God though in  
the germ.

## XIV

And I shall thereupon  
Take rest, ere I be gone 80  
Once more on my adventure brave and new:

Fearless and unperplexed,  
 When I wage battle next,  
 What weapons to select, what armor to indue.

## XV

Youth ended, I shall try 85  
 My gain or loss thereby;  
 Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:  
 And I shall weigh the same,  
 Give life its praise or blame:  
 Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being  
                     old. 90

## XVI

For, note when evening shuts,  
 A certain moment cuts  
 The deed off, calls the glory from the gray:  
 A whisper from the west  
 Shoots—"Add this to the rest, 95  
 Take it and try its worth: here dies another  
                     day."

## XVII

So, still within this life,  
 Though lifted o'er its strife,  
 Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
 "This rage was right i' the main, 100  
 That acquiescence vain:  
 The Future I may face now I have proved the  
                     Past."

## XVIII

For more is not reserved  
 To man, with soul just nerved  
 To act to-morrow what he learns to-day: 105

Here, work enough to watch  
The Master work, and catch  
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's  
true play.

## XIX

As it was better, youth  
Should strive, through acts uncouth, 110  
Toward making, than repose on aught found  
made:  
So, better, age, exempt  
From strife, should know, than tempt  
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor  
be afraid!

## XX

Enough now, if the Right 115  
And Good and Infinite  
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine  
own,  
With knowledge absolute,  
Subject to no dispute  
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel  
alone. 120

## XXI

Be there, for once and all,  
Severed great minds from small,  
Announced to each his station in the Past!  
Was I, the world arraigned,  
Were they, my soul disdained, 125  
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us  
peace at last!

## XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate?  
Ten men love what I hate,  
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;  
Ten, who in ears and eyes  
Match me: we all surmise,  
They, this thing, and I, that: whom shall my  
soul believe? 130

## XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass  
Called "work," must sentence pass,  
Things done, that took the eye and had the  
price;  
O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world laid its hand,  
Found straightway to its mind, could value in  
a trice: 135

## XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb  
And finger failed to plumb,  
So passed in making up the main account;  
All instincts immature,  
All purposes unsure,  
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the  
man's amount: 140

## XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed  
Into a narrow act,  
Fancies that broke through language and es-  
caped; 145

All I could never be,  
All, men ignored in me,  
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the  
pitcher shaped. 150

## XXVI

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,  
That metaphor! and feel  
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—  
Thou, to whom fools propound,  
When the wine makes its round, 155  
“Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone,  
seize to-day!”

## XXVII

Fool! All that is, at all,  
Lasts ever, past recall;  
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:  
What entered into thee, 160  
*That* was, is, and shall be:  
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and  
clay endure.

## XXVIII

He fixed thee mid this dance  
Of plastic circumstance,  
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest: 165  
Machinery just meant  
To give thy soul its bent,  
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently im-  
pressed.

## XXIX

What though the earlier grooves  
 Which ran the laughing loves 170  
 Around thy base, no longer pause and press?  
 What though about thy rim,  
 Scull-things in order grim  
 Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner  
 stress?

## XXX

Look not thou down but up! 175  
 To uses of a cup,  
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's  
 peal,  
 The new wine's foaming flow,  
 The Master's lips a-glow!  
 Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst  
 thou with earth's wheel? 180

## XXXI

But I need, now as then,  
 Thee, God, who moulded men;  
 And since, not even while the whirl was worst,  
 Did I—to the wheel of life  
 With shapes and colors rife, 185  
 Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake thy  
 thirst

## XXXII

So, take and use thy work,  
 Amend what flaws may lurk,  
 What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the  
 aim!

My times be in thy hand!

190

Perfect the cup as planned!

Let age approve of youth, and death complete  
the same!

(1864).

## PROSPICE

FEAR death? to feel the fog in my throat,  
The mist in my face,  
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote  
I am nearing the place,  
The power of the night, the press of the storm, 5  
The post of the foe;  
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,  
Yet the strong man must go:  
For the journey is done and the summit attained,  
And the barriers fall, 10  
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be  
gained,  
The reward of it all.  
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,  
The best and the last!  
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore, 15  
And bade me creep past.  
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers  
The heroes of old,  
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
Of pain, darkness and cold. 20  
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
The black minute's at end,  
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,  
Shall dwindle, shall blend,



Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain, 25  
Then a light, then thy breast,  
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
And with God be the rest!

(1864).

## YOUTH AND ART

### I

It once might have been, once only:  
We lodged in a street together,  
You, a sparrow on the housetop lonely,  
I, a lone she-bird of his feather.

### II

Your trade was with sticks and clay, 5  
You thumbed, thrust, patted and polished,  
Then laughed "They will see some day  
Smith made, and Gibson demolished."

### III

My business was song, song, song;  
I chirped, cheeped, trilled and twittered, 10  
"Kate Brown's on the boards ere long,  
And Grisi's existence embittered!"

### IV

I earned no more by a warble  
Than you by a sketch in plaster;  
You wanted a piece of marble, 15  
I needed a music-master.

## V

We studied hard in our styles,  
Chipped each at a crust like Hindoos,  
For air, looked out on the tiles,  
For fun, watched each other's windows. 20

## VI

You lounged, like a boy of the South,  
Cap and blouse—nay, a bit of beard too;  
Or you got it, rubbing your mouth  
With fingers the clay adhered to.

## VII

And I—soon managed to find 25  
Weak points in the flower-fence facing,  
Was forced to put up a blind  
And be safe in my corset-lacing.

## VIII

No harm! It was not my fault  
If you never turned your eye's tail up 30  
As I shook upon E *in alt*,  
Or ran the chromatic scale up:

## IX

For spring bade the sparrows pair,  
And the boys and girls gave guesses,  
And stalls in our street looked rare 35  
With bulrush and watercresses.

## X

Why did not you pinch a flower  
In a pellet of clay and fling it?  
Why did not I put a power  
Of thanks in a look, or sing it?

40

## XI

I did look, sharp as a lynx  
(And yet the memory rankles),  
When models arrived, some minx  
Tripped up-stairs, she and her ankles.

## XII

But I think I gave you as good!  
"That foreign fellow,—who can know  
How she pays, in a playful mood,  
For his tuning her that piano?"

45

## XIII

Could you say so, and never say,  
"Suppose we join hands and fortunes,  
And I fetch her from over the way,  
Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes?"

50

## XIV

No, no: you would not be rash,  
Nor I rasher and something over:  
You've to settle yet Gibson's hash,  
And Grisi yet lives in clover.

55

## XV

But you meet the Prince at the Board,  
I'm queen myself at *bals-parés*,  
I've married a rich old lord,  
And you're dubbed knight and an R.A.

60

## XVI

Each life unfulfilled, you see;  
It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:  
We have not sighed deep, laughed free,  
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy,

## XVII

And nobody calls you a dunce,  
And people suppose me clever:  
This could but have happened once,  
And we missed it, lost it for ever.

65

(1864).

## APPARENT FAILURE

“We shall soon lose a celebrated building.”

—*Paris Newspaper.*

### I

No, for I'll save it! Seven years since,  
I passed through Paris, stopped a day  
To see the baptism of your Prince;  
Saw, made my bow, and went my way:  
Walking the heat and headache off,  
I took the Seine-side, you surmise,  
Thought of the Congress, Gortschakoff,  
Cavour's appeal and Buol's replies,  
So sauntered till—what met my eyes?

5

### II

Only the Doric little Morgue!  
The dead-house where you show your drowned:  
Petrarch's Vaucluse makes proud the Sorgue,  
Your Morgue has made the Seine renowned.  
One pays one's debt in such a case;  
I plucked up heart and entered,—stalked,  
Keeping a tolerable face  
Compared with some whose cheeks were chalked:  
Let them! No Briton's to be balked!

10

15

### III

First came the silent gazers; next,  
A screen of glass, we're thankful for;

20

Last, the sight's self, the sermon's text,  
The three men who did most abhor  
Their life in Paris yesterday,  
So killed themselves: and now, enthroned  
Each on his copper couch, they lay  
Fronting me, waiting to be owned.  
I thought, and think, their sin's atoned.

25

## IV

Poor men, God made, and all for that!  
The reverence struck me; o'er each head  
Religiously was hung its hat,  
Each coat dripped by the owner's bed,  
Sacred from touch: each had his berth,  
His bounds, his proper place of rest,  
Who last night tenanted on earth  
Some arch, where twelve such slept abreast,—  
Unless the plain asphalt seemed best.

30

35

## V

How did it happen, my poor boy?  
You wanted to be Buonaparte  
And have the Tuileries for toy,  
And could not, so it broke your heart?  
You, old one by his side, I judge,  
Were, red as blood, a socialist,  
A leveller! Does the Empire grudge  
You've gained what no Republic missed?  
Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

40

45

## VI

And this—why, he was red in vain,  
Or black,—poor fellow that is blue!

What fancy was it, turned your brain ?

Oh, women were the prize for you!

Money gets women, cards and dice

50

Get money, and ill-luck gets just

The copper couch and one clear nice

Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,

The right thing to extinguish lust!

## VII

It 's wiser being good than bad;

55

It 's safer being meek than fierce:

It 's fitter being sane than mad.

My own hope is, a sun will pierce

The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;

That, after Last, returns the First,

60

Though a wide compass round be fetched;

That what began best, can't end worst,

Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

(1864).



## HERVÉ RIEL

### I

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,

Did the English fight the French,—woe to France!  
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through the blue,

Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,

Came crowding ship on ship to Saint Malo on the Rance,

5

With the English fleet in view.

### II

'T was the squadron that escaped, with the victor in full chase;

First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship, Damfreville;

Close on him fled, great and small,

Twenty-two good ships in all;

10

And they signalled to the place

“Help the winners of a race!

Get us guidance, give us harbor, take us quick—or, quicker still,

Here 's the English can and will!”

## III

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board;

15

“Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass?” laughed they:

“Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarred and scored,

Shall the ‘Formidable’ here with her twelve and eighty guns

Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,

Trust to enter where ’t is ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,

20

And with flow at full beside?

Now, ’t is slackest ebb of tide.

Reach the mooring? Rather say,

While rock stands or water runs,

Not a ship will leave the bay!”

25

## IV

Then was called a council straight.

Brief and bitter the debate:

“Here’s the English at our heels; would you have them take in tow

All that’s left us of the fleet, linked together stern and bow,

For a prize to Plymouth Sound?

30

Better run the ships aground!”

(Ended Damfreville his speech).

“Not a minute more to wait!

Let the Captains all and each

Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on the  
beach!

35

France must undergo her fate.

## V

“Give the word!” But no such word  
Was ever spoke or heard;

For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all  
these

—A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate—first, second,  
third?

40

No such man of mark, and meet  
With his betters to compete!

But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for  
the fleet,

A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

## VI

And “What mockery or malice have we here?” cried  
Hervé Riel:

45

“Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards,  
fools, or rogues?

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the sound-  
ings, tell

On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell  
’Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river dis-  
embogues?

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the lying ’s  
for?

50

Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse  
than fifty Hogues!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe  
me there 's a way!

55

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this 'Formidable' clear,

Make the others follow mine,

And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know  
well,

60

Right to Solidor past Grève,

And there lay them safe and sound;

And if one ship misbehave,

—Keel so much as grate the ground,

Why, I've nothing but my life,—here's my head!"  
cries Hervé Riel.

65

## VII

Not a minute more to wait.

"Steer us in, then, small and great!

Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!"  
cried its chief.

Captains, give the sailor place!

He is Admiral, in brief.

70

Still the north-wind, by God's grace!

See the noble fellow's face

As the big ship, with a bound,

Clears the entry like a hound,

Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide sea's  
profound!

75

See, safe through shoal and rock,

How they follow in a flock,

Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the  
ground,

Not a spar that comes to grief!

The peril, see, is past, 80

All are harbored to the last,

And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!"—sure as  
fate,

Up the English come—too late!

## VIII

So, the storm subsides to calm:

They see the green trees wave 85

On the heights o'erlooking Grève.

Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.

"Just our rapture to enhance,

Let the English rake the bay,

Gnash their teeth and glare askance 90

As they cannonade away!

'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"

How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's counte-  
nance!

Out burst all with one accord,

"This is Paradise for Hell! 95

Let France, let France's King

Thank the man that did the thing!"

What a shout, and all one word,

"Hervé Riel!"

As he stepped in front once more, 100

Not a symptom of surprise

In the frank blue Breton eyes,

Just the same man as before.

## IX

Then said Damfreville, "My friend,  
I must speak out at the end,

105

Though I find the speaking hard.  
Praise is deeper than the lips:

You have saved the King his ships,

You must name your own reward.

'Faith, our sun was near eclipse!

110

Demand whate'er you will,

France remains your debtor still.

Ask to heart's content and have! or my name's not  
Damfreville."

## X

Then a beam of fun outbroke

On the bearded mouth that spoke,

115

As the honest heart laughed through

Those frank eyes of Breton blue:

"Since I needs must say my say,

Since on board the duty 's done,

And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it  
but a run?—

120

Since 't is ask and have, I may—

Since the others go ashore—

Come! A good whole holiday!

Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle  
Aurore!"

That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

125

## XI

Name and deed alike are lost:

Not a pillar nor a post

In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell:

Not a head in white and black  
On a single fishing-smack, 130  
In memory of the man but for whom had gone to  
wrack

All that France saved from the fight whence Eng-  
land bore the bell.

Go to Paris: rank on rank  
Search the heroes flung pell-mell  
On the Louvre, face and flank! 135

You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé  
Riel.

So, for better and for worse,  
Hervé Riel, accept my verse!  
In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more  
Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife the  
Belle Aurore!

(1871).

# THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC

## PROLOGUE

SUCH a starved bank of moss  
Till, that May-morn,  
Blue ran the flash across:  
Violets were born!

Sky—what a scowl of cloud  
Till, near and far,  
Ray on ray split the shroud:  
Splendid, a star!

World—how it walled about  
Life with disgrace  
Till God's own smile came out:  
That was thy face!

## EPILOGUE

### I

What a pretty tale you told me  
Once upon a time  
—Said you found it somewhere (scold me!)  
Was it prose or was it rhyme,  
Greek or Latin? Greek, you said,  
While your shoulder propped my head.



## II

Anyhow there 's n forgetting  
This much if no more, 20  
That a poet (pray, no petting!)  
Yes, a bard, sir, famed of yore,  
Went where suchlike used to go,  
Singing for a prize, you know.

## III

Well, he had to sing, nor merely 25  
Sing but play the lyre;  
Playing was important clearly  
Quite as singing: I desire,  
Sir, you keep the fact in mind  
For a purpose that 's behind. 30

## IV

There stood he, while deep attention  
Held the judges round,  
—Judges able, I should mention,  
To detect the slightest sound  
Sung or played amiss: such ears 35  
Had old judges, it appears!

## V

None the less he sang out boldly,  
Played in time and tune,  
Till the judges, weighing coldly  
Each note's worth, seemed, late or soon, 40  
Sure to smile "In vain one tries  
Picking faults out: take the prize!"

## VI

When, a mischief! Were they seven

Strings the lyre possessed?

Oh, and afterwards eleven,

Thank you! Well, sir,—who had guessed

Such ill luck in store?—it happed

One of those same seven strings snapped.

45

## VII

All was lost, then! No! a cricket

(What “cicada?” Pooh!)

—Some mad thing that left its thicket

For mere love of music—flew

With its little heart on fire,

Lighted on the crippled lyre.

50

## VIII

So that when (Ah, joy!) our singer

For his truant string

Feels with disconcerted finger,

What does cricket else but fling

Fiery heart forth, sound the note

Wanted by the throbbing throat?

55

60

## IX

Ay, and ever to the ending,

Cricket chirps at need,

Executes the hand's intending,

Promptly, perfectly,—indeed

Saves the singer from defeat

With her chirrup low and sweet.

65

## X

Till, at ending, all the judges  
Cry with one assent,  
“Take the prize—a prize who grudges  
Such a voice and instrument? 70  
Why, we took your lyre for harp,  
So it thrilled us forth F sharp!”

## XI

Did the conqueror spurn the creature,  
Once its service done?  
That 's no such uncommon feature 75  
In the case when Music's son  
Finds his Lotte's power too spent  
For aiding soul-development.

## XII

No! This other on returning  
Homeward, prize in hand, 80  
Satisfied his bosom's yearning:  
(Sir, I hope you understand!)  
—Said “Some record there must be  
Of this cricket's help to me!”

## XIII

So, he made himself a statue: 85  
Marble stood, life-size;  
On the lyre, he pointed at you,  
Perched his partner in the prize;  
Never more apart you found  
Her, he throned, from him, she crowned. 90

## XIV

That 's the tale: its application?  
Somebody I know  
Hopes one day for reputation  
Through his poetry that 's—Oh,  
All so learned and so wise  
And deserving of a prize!

95

## XV

If he gains one, will some ticket,  
When his statue 's built,  
Tell the gazer "'T was a cricket  
Helped my crippled lyre, whose lilt  
Sweet and low, when strength usurped  
Softness' place i' the scale, she chirped?

100

## XVI

"For as victory was nighest,  
While I sang and played,—  
With my lyre at lowest, highest,  
Right alike,—one string that made  
'Love' sound soft was snapt in twain,  
Never to be heard again,—

105

## XVII

"Had not a kind cricket fluttered,  
Perched upon the place  
Vacant left, and duly uttered  
'Love, Love, Love,' whene'er the bass  
Asked the treble to atone  
For its somewhat sombre drone."

110

## XVIII

But you don't know music! Wherefore

115

Keep on casting pearls

To a—poet? All I care for

Is—to tell him that a girl's

“Love” comes aptly in when gruff

Grows his singing. (There, enough!)

(1878).

## PHEIDIPPIDES

*χαίρετε, νικῶμεν.*

FIRST I salute this soil of the blessed, river and rock  
Gods of my birthplace, dæmons and heroes, honor to all.  
Then I name thee, claim thee for our patron, co-equal in  
praise

—Ay, with Zeus the Defender, with Her of the ægis and  
spear!

Also, ye of the bow and the buskin, praised be your peer, 5  
Now, henceforth and for ever,—O latest to whom I up-  
raise

Hand and heart and voice! For Athens, leave pasture  
and flock!

Present to help, potent to save, Pan—patron I call!

Archons of Athens, topped by the tettix, see, I return!  
See, 't is myself here standing alive, no spectre that  
speaks! 10

Crowned with the myrtle, did you command me, Athens  
and you,

“Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!  
Persia has come, we are here, where is She?” Your  
command I obeyed,

Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs  
through,

Was the space between city and city: two days, two nights  
did I burn 15

Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.

Into their midst I broke: breath served but for "Persia  
has come.

Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and earth;  
Razed to the ground is Eretria—but Athens, shall Athens  
sink,

Drop into dust and die—the flower of Hellas utterly die, 20  
Die with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid, the  
stander-by?

Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch  
o'er destruction's brink?

How,—when? No care for my limbs!—there's lightning  
in all and some—

Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens—Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond? 25  
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,  
Malice,—each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified  
hate!

Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses.  
I stood

Quivering,—the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch  
from dry wood:

"Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate? 30  
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athene, are Spartans a quarry be-  
yond

Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them  
'Ye must'!"

No bolt launched from Olumpos! Lo, their answer at  
last!

"Has Persia come,—does Athens ask aid,—may Sparta  
befriend?

Nowise precipitate judgment—too weighty the issue at stake!

35

Count we no time lost time which lags through respect to the gods!

Ponder that precept of old, 'No warfare, whatever the odds

In your favor, so long as the moon, half-orbed, is unable to take

Full-circle her state in the sky!' Already she rounds to it fast:

Athens must wait, patient as we—who judgment suspend."

40

Athens,—except for that sparkle,—thy name, I had mouldered to ash!

That sent a blaze through my blood; off, off and away was I back,

—Not one word to waste, one look to lose on the false and the vile!

Yet "O gods of my land!" I cried, as each hillock and plain,

Wood and stream, I knew, I named, rushing past them again,

45

"Have ye kept faith, proved mindful of honors we paid you erewhile?

Vain was the filleted victim, the fulsome libation! Too rash

Love in its choice, paid you so largely service so slack!

"Oak and olive and bay,—I bid you cease to enwreathe Brows made bold by your leaf! Fade at the Persian's foot,

50



You that, our patrons were pledged, should never adorn  
a slave!

Rather I hail thee, Parnes,—trust to thy wild waste tract!  
Treeless, herbless, lifeless mountain! What matter if  
slacked

My speed may hardly be, for homage to crag and to cave  
No deity deigns to drape with verdure?—at least I can  
breathe,

55

Fear in thee no fraud from the blind, no lie from the  
mute!"

Such my cry as, rapid, I ran over Parnes' ridge;  
Gully and gap I clambered and cleared till, sudden, a bar  
Jutted, a stoppage of stone against me, blocking the way.  
Right! for I minded the hollow to traverse, the fissure  
across:

60

"Where I could enter, there I depart by! Night in the  
fosse?

Athens to aid? Though the dive were through Erebos,  
thus I obey—

Out of the day dive, into the day as bravely arise! No  
bridge

Better!"—when—ha! what was it I came on, of wonders  
that are?

There, in the cool of a cleft, sat he—majestical Pan!

65

Ivy drooped wanton, kissed his head, moss cushioned his  
hoof:

All the great god was good in the eyes grave-kindly—the  
curl

Carved on the bearded cheek, amused at a mortal's  
awe

As, under the human trunk, the goat-thighs grand I  
saw.

"Halt, Pheidippides!"—halt I did, my brain of a whirl: 70

"Hither to me! Why pale in my presence?" he gracious  
began:

"How is it,—Athens, only in Hellas, holds me aloof?

"Athens, she only, rears me no fane, makes me no feast!  
Wherefore? Than I what godship to Athens more help-  
ful of old?

Ay, and still, and for ever her friend! Test Pan, trust 75  
me!

Go, bid Athens take heart, laugh Persia to scorn, have faith  
In the temples and tombs! Go, say to Athens, 'The  
Goat-God saith:

When Persia—so much as strews not the soil—is cast in  
the sea,

Then praise Pan who fought in the ranks with your most  
and least,

Goat-thigh to greaved-thigh, made one cause with the  
free and the bold!' 80

"Say Pan saith: 'Let this, foreshowing the place, be the  
pledge!'"

(Gay, the liberal hand held out this herbage I bear  
—Fennel,—I grasped it a-tremble with dew—whatever  
it bode)

"While, as for thee . . ." But enough! He was gone.  
If I ran hitherto—

Be sure that the rest of my journey, I ran no longer, but  
flew. 85

Parnes to Athens—earth no more, the air was my road:

Here am I back. Praise Pan, we stand no more on the  
razor's edge!

Pan for Athens, Pan for me! I too have a guerdon rare!

---

Then spoke Miltiades. "And thee, best runner of  
Greece,

Whose limbs did duty indeed,—what gift is promised  
thyself?

90

Tell it us straightway,—Athens the mother demands of  
her son!"

Rosily blushed the youth: he paused; but, lifting at  
length

His eyes from the ground, it seemed as he gathered the  
rest of his strength

Into the utterance—"Pan spoke thus: 'For what thou  
hast done

Count on a worthy reward! Henceforth be allowed thee  
release

95

From the racer's toil, no vulgar reward in praise or in  
pelf!"

"I am bold to believe, Pan means reward the most to my  
mind!

Fight I shall, with our foremost, wherever this fennel may  
grow,—

Pound—Pan helping us—Persia to dust, and, under the  
deep,

Whelm her away for ever; and then,—no Athens to  
save,—

100

Marry a certain maid, I know keeps faith to the brave,—  
Hie to my house and home: and, when my children shall  
creep

Close to my knees,—recount how the God was awful yet  
 kind,  
 Promised their sire reward to the full—rewarding him—  
 so!”

---

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day: 105  
 So, when Persia was dust, all cried “To Akropolis!  
 Run, Pheidippides, one race more! the meed is thy due!  
 ‘Athens is saved, thank Pan,’ go shout!” He flung down  
 his shield,  
 Ran like fire once more: and the space ’twixt the Fennel-  
 field  
 And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs  
 through, 110  
 Till in he broke: “Rejoice, we conquer!” Like wine  
 through clay,  
 Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died—the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of  
 salute  
 Is still “Rejoice!”—his word which brought rejoicing  
 indeed.  
 So is Pheidippides happy for ever,—the noble strong man 115  
 Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom  
 a god loved so well;  
 He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was  
 suffered to tell  
 Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,  
 So to end gloriously—once to shout, thereafter be mute:  
 “Athens is saved!”—Pheidippides dies in the shout for  
 his meed.

## ECHETLOS

HERE is a story, shall stir you! Stand up, Greeks dead  
and gone,  
Who breasted, beat Barbarians, stemmed Persia rolling  
on,  
Did the deed and saved the world, for the day was Mar-  
athon!

No man but did his manliest, kept rank and fought away  
In his tribe and file: up, back, out, down—was the spear-  
arm play:

5

Like a wind-whipt branchy wood, all spear-arms a-swing  
that day!

But one man kept no rank, and his sole arm plied no  
spear,

As a flashing came and went, and a form i' the van, the  
rear,

Brightened the battle up, for he blazed now there, now  
here

Nor helmed nor shielded, he! but, a goat-skin all his  
wear,

10

Like a tiller of the soil, with a clown's limbs broad and  
bare,

Went he ploughing on and on: he pushed with a plough-  
man's share.

Did the weak mid-line give way, as tunnies on whom the  
shark

Precipitates his bulk? Did the right-wing halt when,  
stark

On his heap of slain lay stretched Kallimachos Pol-  
emarch?

15

Did the steady phalanx falter? To the rescue, at the  
need,

The clown was ploughing Persia, clearing Greek earth  
of weed,

As he routed through the Sakian and rooted up the  
Mede.

But the deed done, battle won,—nowhere to be descried  
On the meadow, by the stream, at the marsh,—look far  
and wide

20

From the foot of the mountain, no, to the last blood-  
plashed sea-side,—

Not anywhere on view blazed the large limbs thonged  
and brown,

Shearing and clearing still with the share before which—  
down

To the dust went Persia's pomp, as he ploughed for  
Greece, that clown!

How spake the Oracle? "Care for no name at all!

25

Say but just this: 'We praise one helpful whom we  
call

The Holder of the Ploughshare.' The great deed ne'er  
grows small."

Not the great name! Sing—woe for the great name Mí-  
tiadés

And its end at Paros isle! Woe for Themistokles

—Satrap in Sardis court! Name not the clown like these!  
(1880).

## WHY I AM A LIBERAL

“WHY?” Because all I haply can and do,  
All that I am now, all I hope to be,—  
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free  
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,  
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,  
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,  
These shall I bid men—each in his degree  
Also God-guided—bear, and gayly too?

5

But little do or can the best of us:  
That little is achieved through Liberty.

10

Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,  
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,  
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss  
A brother's right to freedom. That is “Why.”

(1885).



# ASOLANDO

## EPILOGUE

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,  
When you set your fancies free,  
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—

Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,  
—Pity me?

5

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!

What had I on earth to do  
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?  
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel  
—Being—who?

10

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,

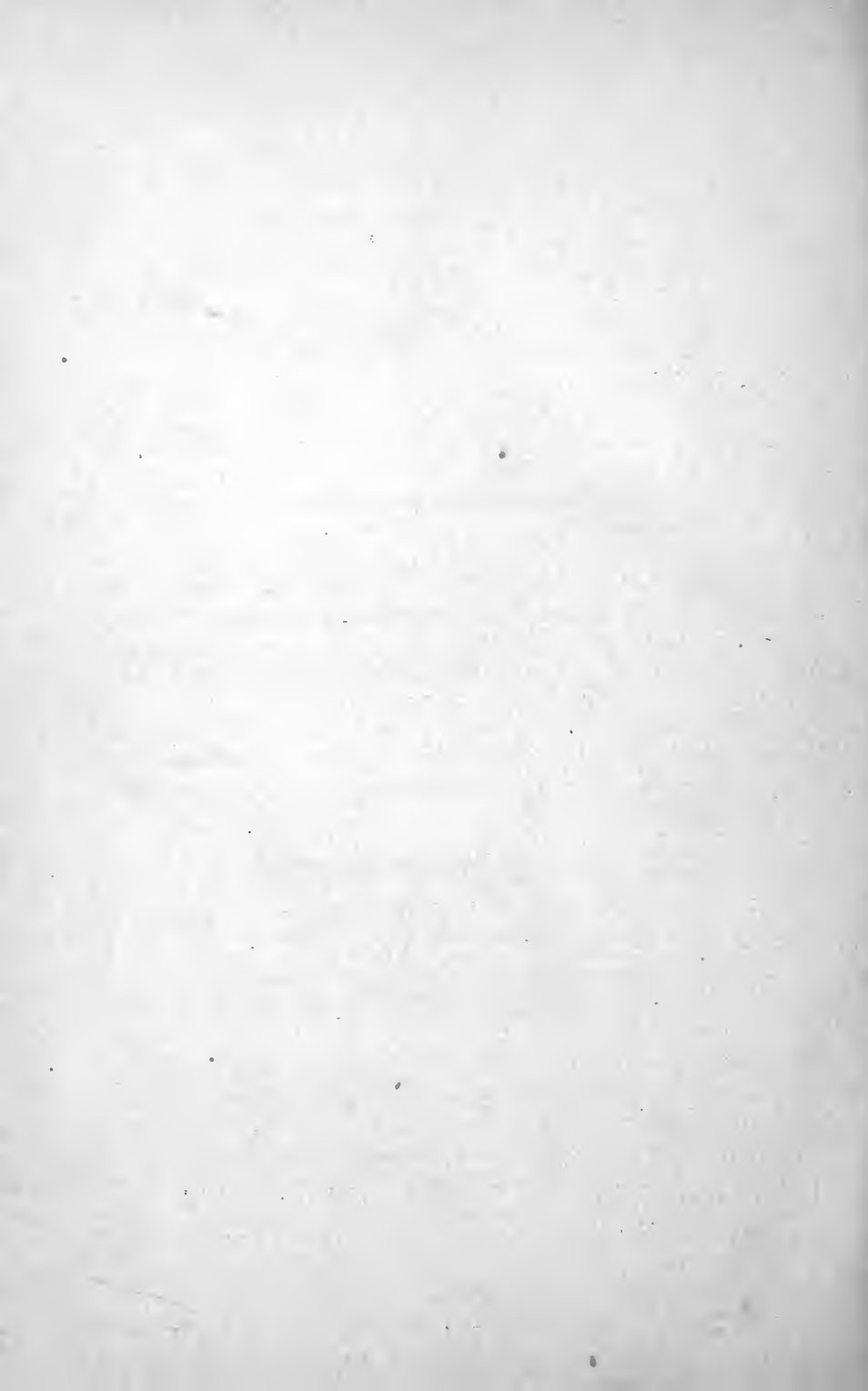
Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.

15

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time

Greet the unseen with a cheer!  
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,  
“Strive and thrive!” cry “Speed,—fight on, fare ever  
There as here!”

(1890).



## NOTES

### SONGS FROM "PIPPA PASSES"

The circumstances under which Browning conceived the character of Felippa, or Pippa, the little silk-winder of Asolo, have been already explained in the Introduction (see page XIV). The first selection, "All service ranks the same with God," is the New Year's Hymn which she sings as she rises from bed on her one holiday in the year. During the day she passes in and out of the village, singing her artless songs, and unconsciously influencing the lives of those about her. The second song here given, "The year's at the Spring," awakens two wicked people to a sense of their guilt and the divine government of the world. The third song, "Give her but a least excuse to love me," rouses a young painter to a higher conception of love and art. The explanation of this song is given in the lines which follow it in the original:—

What name was that the little girl sang forth?  
Kate? The Cornaro, doubtless, who renounced  
The crown of Cyprus to be lady here  
At Asolo, where still her memory stays,  
And peasants sing how once a certain page  
Pined for the grace of her so far above  
His power of doing good to, "Kate the Queen—  
She never could be wronged, be poor," he sighed,  
"Need him to help her!"

Browning gives us in the first five lines of each stanza the page's song; in the last four the comments of the Queen and her maid, who overhear him. Caterina (or Kate) Cornaro was a Venetian citizen who married the King of Cyprus, and after his death, resigning her authority to the Republic, retired to keep a small court at the Venetian village of Asolo, where she "wielded her little sceptre for her people's good, and won their love by gentleness and grace."

Page 4, LINE 18.—jesses. Straps for hawks' legs.

## CAVALIER TUNES

It should be borne in mind that these songs are "dramatic lyrics"—that is to say, they represent not Browning's own sentiments, but feelings and opinions which he ascribes to imaginary persons. His own view of the great struggle between the King and the Parliament in England in the seventeenth century was very different from that here expressed, as we see from his drama, *Strafford*. There he has expressed an admiration for the Puritan leaders which he repeated at the end of his life in *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day* (Charles Avison). In this poem he looks

back to times of England's best!  
Parliament stands for privilege—life and limb  
Guards Hollis, Haselrig, Strode, Hampden, Pym,  
The famous Five. There's rumor of arrest.  
Bring up the Train Bands, Southwark! They protest:  
Shall we not all join chorus? . . .

Fife, trump, drum, sound! and singers then,  
Marching, say "Pym, the man of men!"  
Up, heads, your proudest—out, throats, your loudest—  
"Somerset's Pym!"

Strafford from the block, Eliot from the den,  
Foes, friends, shout "Pym, our citizen!"  
Wail, the foes he quelled,—hail, the friends he held,  
"Tavistock's Pym!"

Hearts prompt heads, hands that ply the pen  
Teach babes unborn the where and when  
—Tyrants, he braved them,—patriots, he saved them—  
"Westminster's Pym!"

The three *Cavalier Tunes* voice the feelings of the supporters of the royal cause at three different stages of the struggle: the first, just before the hoisting of the royal standard at Nottingham at the outbreak of the war; the second, in the middle period, when Cromwell's troopers, the famous "Ironsides," were beginning to turn the tide in favor of the Parliament; the third, when the Parliamentary cause had triumphed, and only a few royalist castles in remote parts of the country were holding out.

## I

5, 2.—**crop-headed.** J. R. Green in his *History of the English People* gives the following explanation of the names "Roundhead" and "Cavalier": "To wear his hair long and flowing almost to the shoulder was at this time the mark of a gentleman, whether Puritan or anti-Puritan. Servants, on the other hand, or apprentices, wore the hair closely cropped to the head. The crowds who flocked to Westminster were chiefly made up of London apprentices; and their opponents taunted them as 'Roundheads.' They replied by branding the courtiers about Whitehall as soldiers of fortune or 'Cavaliers.' The gentlemen who gathered round the King in the coming struggle were as far from being military adventurers as the gentlemen who fought for the Parliament were London apprentices; but the words soon passed into nicknames for the whole mass of royalists and patriots."

7-15.—**Pym, Hampden, Hazelrig, and Fiennes** were all leading men on the Parliamentary side. So was young **Harry**, the younger Sir Henry Vane, who was Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony 1636-7. There is a fine statue of him in the entrance hall of the Boston Public Library. At the Restoration he was exempted from the Act of Pardon and Oblivion, and executed.

7.—**carles.** Churls or boors, low, rude fellows.

8.—**parles.** Debates. (French *parler*, to speak.) An old word used by Shakespeare.

14.—**obsequies' knell.** The bell rung at his funeral. **Serve** is imperative, or subjunctive of wish.

6, 16.—**Rupert.** Prince of the Palatinate, a nephew of Charles I. After serving in Germany in the Thirty Years' War, he became famous as a dashing cavalry leader in the royalist army. He was Governor of the Hudson Bay Company, and a large tract of territory in the far North of the American continent for a long time bore the name of Prince Rupert's Land. The terminal port of the new Grand Trunk Pacific Railway on the Pacific Coast was a year or two ago named Rupertstown to perpetuate his memory.

20.—**snarls.** Plots, intrigues.

23.—**Nottingham.** See above.

## II

3.—**rouse.** A toast drunk with a full bumper.

7, 16.—**Noll.** The Cavalier nickname for Oliver Cromwell. He was the leader of the famous "Ironsides," and became the greatest general on the Parliamentary side. "He took for his soldiers sternly Puritan men, who had their hearts in his cause; but he was not content with religious zeal alone. Everyone who served under him must undergo the severest discipline. After a few months he had a cavalry regiment under his orders so fiery, and at the same time so well under restraint, that no body of horse on either side could compare with it."—Gardiner's *History of the Great Civil War*. The son of the cavalier who sings this song evidently refused to surrender, and was shot by Cromwell's troopers as he was laughing them to scorn and cheering for the King.

## III

8, 10.—**Castle Brancepeth** is in the county of Durham, on the river Wear. It was probably chosen by Browning on account of its romantic name.

## THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

This poem was written for Willie Macready, the son of the famous actor for whom Browning wrote his first drama, *Strafford*. Willie was recovering from an illness and wanted a poem to illustrate from his paint box. Browning's publisher had a blank page at the end of "Dramatic Lyrics," the third issue in the *Bells and Pomegranates* series, and this poem was used to fill the gap. It has been probably the most popular thing Browning ever wrote. The story is a very old one, going back to the mythology of the ancient nations of the earth. There is an early seventeenth-century version of the legend which resembles Browning's account in many details, though he has added touches of his own. It was a common legend in the Middle Ages, the period in which Browning places it. **Pied** or **piebald** means of different colors. See lines 79–82.

11, 69.—**painted tombstone.** It was the fashion in the Middle Ages to place upon the tomb of a distinguished man a painted effigy of him as he appeared in life.

13, 123.—**Julius Cæsar.** Referring to the story of Cæsar's saving the manuscript of his famous Commentaries on his Gallic Wars. The story arose out of the fact that in the siege of Alexandria in B. C. 48 the ship in which Cæsar was sailing was captured, and he was obliged to swim for his life. Froude remarks: "Legend is more absurd than usual over this incident. It pretends that he swam with one hand, and carried his Commentaries, holding them above water with the other. As if a general would take his MSS. with him into a hot action!"

14, 139.—**nuncheon.** Another word for luncheon.

158–160.—**Claret, Moselle, vin-de-Grave, Hock . . . Rhenish** Names of wines.

15, 182.—**stiver.** A small coin, as we should say, a cent.

19, 296.—**trepanned.** Ensnared, kidnapped.

## MY LAST DUCHESS

Ferrara, which Browning gives as the scene of this poem, is a town in North Italy, not far from Venice. It was the capital of the House of Este, who were among the most accomplished and the most cruel of the tyrants of the Italian Renaissance. Symonds says in his *Age of the Despots*: "Under the House of Este, Ferrara was famous throughout Italy for its gaiety and splendor. No city enjoyed more brilliant or more frequent public shows. Nowhere did the aristocracy retain so much feudal magnificence and chivalrous enjoyment. The square castle of red brick, which still stands in the middle of the town, was thronged with poets, players, fools who enjoyed an almost European reputation, court flatterers, knights, pages, scholars, and fair ladies. But beneath its cube of solid masonry, on a level with the moat, shut out from daylight by the sevenfold series of iron bars, lay dungeons in which the objects of the Duke's displeasure clanked chains and sighed their lives away."

20, 3.—**Frà.** The painter, who is an imaginary character, was a monk like Fra Angelico and other Italian artists of the Renaissance.

21, 45–6.—There has been much discussion as to whether these two lines imply that the Duke gave orders for his wife's execution. Professor Corson put the question to Browning himself, and quotes his answer thus: "'Yes, I meant that the commands were that she should be put to death.' And then after a pause he added with a characteristic dash of expression,

as if the thought had just started in his mind, 'Or he might have had her shut up in a convent.'"

56.—**Claus of Innsbruck.** An imaginary artist. Innsbruck is in the Tyrol. It is famous for the bronze work on the tomb of the emperor Maximilian.

The teacher should take care that the student masters all the points in this exquisite example of the dramatic monologue, Browning's favorite art form.

### COUNT GISMOND

This stirring narrative, in which Browning concentrates the heroic spirit of mediæval chivalry, tells in the very words of the heroine of the incident a straight-forward story which needs no comment; but the reader should not miss the charming equivocation with which the heroine avoids telling her husband that she has been boasting to her friend of his prowess.

### INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

Ratisbon is in Bavaria, on the right bank of the Danube. It was stormed by Napoleon in 1809, after an obstinate defence by the Austrians. Mrs. Orr says: "The story is true; but its actual hero was a man."

28, 1.—**we French.** The story is told by a spectator.

7.—**prone.** Bending or leaning forward.

11.—**Lannes.** One of Napoleon's generals.

29, 29.—**flag-bird.** The Napoleonic standard was a tricolor powdered with golden bees, with an eagle on the central stripe.

—**vans.** Wings. Latin *vannus*, a fan for winnowing grain.

34-5.—**film** is nominative to **sheathes**.

### "HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX"

This poem was written in 1838, when Browning paid his first visit to Italy. He sailed from London in the "Norham Castle," a merchant vessel bound for Trieste on which he was the only passenger. In the Bay of Biscay, the weather was exceedingly stormy, and Browning suffered severely from sea sickness; but the captain had him brought up on deck as they neared the Straits of Gibraltar, that he might not miss the sight of the



celebrated fortress. It was then that he wrote *Home Thoughts, from the Sea* (p. 42), and "*How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*." Browning gives a very interesting account of the composition of the latter poem in a letter addressed to Mr. A. E. Sloan in 1871, and recently published: "'The Ride to Ghent' is altogether an imaginary incident—I remember writing it at sea, off the coast of Africa, sitting under the bulwark of the ship for the shade's sake, with a strong wish to be once more on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' at home. I wrote the poem in pencil on the inside of the cover of Bartoli's '*Simboli trasportati al Morale*'—nearly the only book I had with me. This must account for and excuse the impossible distances (even for 'York') between place and place. I fancied that Ghent was invested, in extremity, and able at last to receive news of succour by some unsuspected line of road—but the quantity of galloping was the main thing in my head."

Browning said on another occasion that this poem has "no sort of historical foundation;" but it obviously has a historical background in the struggle of the Netherlands for civil and religious liberty against Spain in the early seventeenth century.

30, 10.—**pique**. The peak or pommel of the saddle.

14.—**Lokeren**. Twelve miles northeast of Ghent.

15.—**Boom**. Sixteen miles east of Lokeren.

16.—**Düffeld**. Twelve miles east of Boom, and a little north of **Mecheln** (Mechlin or Malines) famous for its church tower and chime.

31, 19.—**Aershot**. Fifteen miles from Düffeld.

22.—**at last**. He could not see his horse before on account of the darkness of the night and the misty morning.

31.—**Hasselt**. Twenty-four miles from Aershot, and seventy-nine from Ghent, according to the route followed.

38.—**Looz** and **Tongres** are out of the direct road from Hasselt to Aix, a distance of about forty miles.

41.—**Dalhem**. This is also out of the way, but these small inaccuracies are not surprising in view of the circumstances under which the poem was written, as described above.

—**a dome-spire**. The cupola of the octagon of the cathedral at Aix, built by Charlemagne for his tomb.

Concerning the rhythm of "*How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*," Joaquin Miller tells this interesting little anecdote. He had been invited by the Archbishop of Dublin to meet Browning, Dean Stanley, Houghton, and

others. "Two of the archbishop's beautiful daughters had been riding in the park with the Earl of Aberdeen. 'And did you gallop?' asked Browning of the younger beauty. 'I galloped, Joyce [Dirck] galloped, we galloped all three.' Then we all laughed at the happy and hearty retort, and Browning, beating the time and clang of galloping horses' feet on the table with his fingers, repeated the exact measure in Latin from Vergil; and the archbishop laughingly took it up, in Latin, where he left off. I then told Browning I had an order—it was my first—for a poem, from the *Oxford Magazine*, and would like to borrow the measure and spirit of his 'Good News' for a prairie fire on the plains, driving buffalo and all other life before it into the river. 'Why not borrow from Vergil as I did? He is as rich as one of your gold mines, while I am but a poor scribe.'" The line Browning quoted from Vergil was probably the celebrated one descriptive of galloping horses: "*Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.*" Notice, however, that Browning has adapted this metre to suit himself. Instead of taking Vergil's line of dactylic feet (one accented and two unaccented syllables) ending with a spondee, he begins his lines always with one or two extra unaccented syllables, and always ends the line with an extra accented syllable. By some, this poem is scanned as anapæstic (two syllables unaccented and one accented) ending with an iamb and sometimes beginning with an iamb (an unaccented and an accented syllable). But we think it will be found that a delicate perception of sound will dictate the scanning of the poem as dactylic, even if we had not Browning's word for it that he borrowed the rhythm of it from Vergil.—Porter and Clarke, *Poems of Robert Browning*.

### THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND

Browning was proud to remember that the Italian patriot Mazzini used to read this poem to his fellow exiles in England to show how an Englishman could sympathize with them.—Mrs. Orr.

33, 8.—**Charles.** Charles Albert, Prince of Carignano, belonged to the royal house of Savoy, but was brought up among the people, and as a young man expressed sympathy with revolutionary principles. He was afterwards accused of betraying Italy, and was bitterly denounced by his former friends.

19.—**Metternich our friend.** Said ironically. Metternich, the Austrian statesman and diplomatist, was the most determined enemy of Italian independence.

20.—See note above on Charles Albert.

34, 41.—**crypt.** Place of concealment; commonly used of a place for burial.

46.—My fears were not for myself, but for my country; “on me Rested the hopes of Italy.”

35, 75.—**duomo.** (Italian) Cathedral.

76.—**Tenebræ.** A service of the Roman Catholic Church, which involves the gradual extinction of the lights on the altar. The Latin word literally means “darkness.”

81.—It was not unusual for a priest to render service to the cause of Italian liberty.

37, 125-7.—Charles Albert became King of Sardinia in 1831 and resigned the crown to his son, Victor Emmanuel, in 1849. He retired to Portugal, where he died in the same year, “broken-hearted and misunderstood.” The patriot’s wish as expressed by Browning was, therefore, fulfilled four years after the poem was published. Charles Albert’s position was a very difficult one, and historians generally take a more favorable view of his conduct than is here given. Browning has merely given characteristic expression to the sentiment of the ardent Italian patriots of the time.

138-44.—These lines forcefully represent the division of opinion in Italy during the apparently fruitless struggles for independence.

## THE LOST LEADER

The suggestion for this early poem was undoubtedly Wordsworth’s abandonment of the Liberal principles of his youth for the reactionary Conservatism of his old age; but it was only a suggestion. “Once call my fancy portrait Wordsworth,” Browning wrote, “and how much more ought one to say.” In another letter he speaks of Wordsworth’s “moral and intellectual superiority,” and protests against taking this poem as an attempt to draw his real likeness. It is really a character study from Browning’s own imagination, and should be so regarded, in justice to both poets.

40, 29-30.—It is best for him to fight for the side he has chosen as well as he can, to fight so well indeed as to threaten

us with defeat before the hour of our final triumph. "Then let him receive," etc.

### HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD

It is interesting to contrast Browning's preference for English birds and flowers, expressed in this poem after his earlier visits to the Continent, with the love of Italy breathed in "*De Gustibus*—" p. 119), which was written after his settlement with his wife in Florence.

### HOME THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA

As to the composition of this poem, see note above on "*How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*."

42, 1-7.—Cape St. Vincent, Cadiz Bay, Trafalgar are all associated with English victories. Gibraltar, the famous rock-fortress which guards the entrance to the Mediterranean, has been held by Great Britain since its capture in 1704. These glorious memories inspire the poet with a sense of his duty to his country, and he mingles prayer for the future with praise for the past. *Say* is imperative. "Whoso turns, etc. . . . let him say 'How can I help England?'"

### THE BOY AND THE ANGEL

This poem was published in *Hood's Magazine* in 1844, and was reprinted, with some slight additions, in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* the following year. It will be found on close examination to be not so simple as it appears at first sight. But its leading thought is clear enough; it is that of Pippa's New Year's Hymn, "*All service ranks the same with God*" (p. 3).

### THE GLOVE

The original basis of this poem is to be found in the *Essais Historiques sur Paris* of Poullain de St. Croix: "One day whilst Francis I amused himself with looking at a combat between his lions, a lady, having let her glove drop, said to De Lorges, 'If you would have me believe that you love me as much as you swear you do, go and bring back my glove.' De Lorges went down, picked up the glove from amidst the ferocious beasts, returned, and threw it in the lady's face; and in

spite of all her advances and cajoleries would never look at her again." The incident was versified at the end of the eighteenth century by Schiller and in the early years of the nineteenth by Leigh Hunt; their versions should be compared with Browning's, which gives the story a different ending and completely changes the point of view. He puts the tale into the mouth of Peter Ronsard (1524-85), at one time page to Francis I and afterwards the leading French poet of his time. Ronsard was a classicist, and begins his story with an apt quotation from Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso) he made in reply to the king's challenge.

47, 14.—**the merest Ixions.** As fickle as Ixi'on, who betrayed the confidence of Jupiter by making love to Juno, and was condemned to revolve ceaselessly on a wheel in Tartarus.

48, 45.—**Clement Marot** (1496-1544). A court poet of an earlier generation than Ronsard; he translated the Psalms, and was driven into exile on account of his Protestant sympathies.

50.—**Ilum Juda Leonem de Tribu.** A familiar phrase from the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible. "The lion of the tribe of Judah."

52, 162.—**Nemean.** The slaying of the Neme'an lion was one of the labors of Hercules.

53, 189.—**Venienti occurrere morbo.** A Latin proverb, equivalent to "Prevention is better than cure"; literally, "Meet the disease when it is coming on." The lady thought it wiser to test De Lorge's affection before marriage than after.

190.—**theorbo.** A stringed instrument of music in common use about the time of the story.

## SAUL

Browning found the suggestion for this, one of his finest religious poems, in the Old Testament narrative of Saul's depression and its relief by the harping of David, the shepherd boy—I Samuel xvi. 14-23, which the teacher would do well to read to the class in order to show how the poet has filled with life and color the mere hints of the original. Browning has read into the ancient story not only doctrines and ideas taken from the New Testament, but modern religious views and sentiments.

54, 1.—**Abner.** The son of Ner, captain of Saul's host. See I Samuel, xxvi. 5.

56, 36-41.—Professor Albert S. Cook suggests that Browning obtained his hints for these tunes from Longus's romance of "Daphnis and Chloe." The first is found on pp. 303-4 (Smith's Translation, Bohn ed.), "He ran through all variations of pastoral melody, he played the tune which the oxen obey, and which attracts the goats,—that in which the sheep delight," etc.; pp. 332-3, ". . . standing under the shade of a beech-tree, he took his pipe from his scrip and breathed into it very gently. The goats stood still, merely lifting up their heads. Next he played the pasture tune, upon which they all put down their heads and began to graze. Now he produced some notes soft and sweet in tone; at once his herd lay down. After this he piped in a sharp key, and they ran off to the wood, as if a wolf were in sight." In answer to the question as to whether there is any historical foundation for David's songs, Rabbi Charles Fleischer of Boston replied in a letter to the editors: "I believe that David's songs in Browning's poem *Saul* are the inspired melodies of our nineteenth century David rather than the songs of Israel's poetic shepherd-king. . . . While, then, I believe that these melodies in *Saul* were not current among the Jews of old, I know that they would serve well to express beliefs and ideals characteristic of the best minds among the Jews of to-day."—Porter and Clarke.

57, 45.—**Jerboa.** The jumping hare.

66, 203.—**Hebron** was one of the cities of refuge, but Browning evidently takes it as the name of a mountain.

67, 204.—**Kidron.** A brook near Jerusalem.

The first nine stanzas of this poem (to line 96) were published in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* in 1845; the later stanzas were written after his marriage, and published in *Men and Women* (1855). The latter part shows a marked advance in intensity of religious conviction, probably due to Mrs. Browning's influence. The student should note that David first played on his harp (36-60); then sang (68-190); and finally spoke (237-312). The inner structure of the poem should be carefully studied so as to bring out the gradual rise of theme from external nature to human activities and sympathies, from the glory of kingship to the glory of fame, and so to the culmination of Divine Love as manifested in the Incarnation.

## LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

This poem was written when Browning was in Rome in the winter of 1853-4, and is said to have been suggested by the contrast between the present desolation of the Campagna and its former magnificence; but the scene is imaginatively treated, and cannot be identified with any place in particular. The living love, even of an obscure boy and girl, counted for more with Browning than all the dead glories of the earth.

## EVELYN HOPE

This poem expresses in the simplest form Browning's view of love as a relation which abides even beyond death. His spiritualization of sensuous beauty in stanza v may be paralleled from *The Statue and the Bust*:—

Where is the use of the lip's red charm,  
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,  
And the blood that blues the inside arm—  
Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,  
The earthly gift to an end divine?

For the Platonism of stanzas iv and vi compare *Cristina*:—

Ages past the soul existed,  
Here an age 'tis resting merely,  
And hence fleets again for ages,  
While the true end, sole and single,  
It stops here for is, this love-way,  
With some other soul to mingle.

The whole subject has been discussed by G. W. Cooke in an excellent paper on "Browning's Theory of Romantic Love" (Boston Browning Society Papers).

## UP AT A VILLA, DOWN IN THE CITY

This poem may be described as an "inverted idyll"; that is to say, while the idyll sets forth the joys of the country in contrast with the artificial life of the city, this poem sets forth the attractions of city life in contrast with the dulness of the country. Browning's own view is, of course, very far from that of the "Italian person of quality" which he here sets forth with so

much humor and not a little irony. "In other poems Browning has rendered the spirit of Italy in her art, her architecture, her music—the glory and shame of her past, the new strivings for united Italy—but here he has given us the simple charm of the 'land of lands'—the unexplained and unexplainable attraction of every-day Italy herself—the fascination of the life of the meanest little town, the perpetual movement, the cheerful noise and bustle, which somehow are only piquantly interesting. The traveller to-day still finds much interest in the doings of the city square. A responsive chant under the window in the early morning calls him to see the Host passing under its awning-canopy with attending acolytes; a wailing dirge at nightfall accompanies a funeral procession with hooded figures and torches; a collection for charity, or a lottery, produces a gathering of citizens, soldiers, and police, all talking and all revelling in the to-do; while water is drawn from the fountain and vegetables are washed in its basin all day long. Beautiful are the mountains, and the olive trees, and fire-flies, but anyone with a taste for humanity will sympathize with the lover of city life who is banished by poverty to his mountain villa, and will enjoy the humor of Browning's delineation of his feelings."—L. A. Fisher in *Poems of Tennyson and Browning*, edited by F. H. Sykes.

82, 4.—by **Bacchus**. *Per Bacco* is still a common Italian oath.

83, 19–20.—With this picture of the Italian landscape in spring may be compared the prose of J. A. Symonds (*New Italian Sketches*): "Nothing changes in Italy. The wooden ploughs are those which Vergil knew. The sight of one of them would save an intelligent lad much trouble in mastering a certain passage in the Georgics. . . . I noticed two young *contadini* in one field . . . guiding their ploughs along a hedge of olive trees, slanting upwards, the white-horned oxen moving slowly through the marl, and the lads bending to press the plough-shares home. It was a delicate piece of color—the grey mist of the olive branches, the warm smoking earth, the creamy flanks of the oxen, the brown limbs and dark eyes of the men, who paused awhile to gaze at us, with shadows cast upon the furrows from their tall straight figures."

84, 39.—**diligence**. The lumbering stage-coach which was the common means of conveyance in Italy before the days of railroads.



42.—**Pulcinello-trumpet.** Blown to announce the puppet show. Pulcinello is the droll clown of the Neapolitan comedy, and his name is a diminutive of the Ital. *pulcino*, a young chicken. In English it is corrupted into Punchinello, and thence to Punch. (Sykes.)

85, 44.—**liberal thieves.** Persons suspected of liberal or revolutionary views. The speaker, being a "person of quality," has no sympathy with the insurrectionist movement which preceded the liberation and union of Italy.

46.—Before the establishment of the present kingdom of Italy, the country was divided into a number of petty principalities and dukedoms.

48.—**Dante** (1265-1321), **Boccaccio** (1313-1375), **Petrarca** (1304-74) are the three great names in early Italian literature. **St. Jerome** (340-420)—the accent is on the first syllable according to English usage—was one of the fathers of the Church, and translated the Bible into the Latin version known as the Vulgate. **Cicero** (B. C. 106-43) is the model of classical prose. The Reverend Don So-and-so, according to the sonnet, combined the excellences of all the ages, and was very nearly—not quite—equal to St. Paul.

52.—**seven swords.** Emblematic of the seven sorrows of the Virgin Mary. The piercing sword is based on Luke ii. 35, and the seven sorrows are (1) Simeon's prophecy, (2) the flight into Egypt, (3) Christ missed, (4) the betrayal, (5) the crucifixion, (6) the descent from the cross, (7) the ascension. (Sykes.)

56.—The Italian cities still levy municipal duties on articles of common consumption, and these are paid on entering the gates.

86, 60.—White shirts and candles were the ordinary marks of those who were obliged by the Church to do public penance in the olden times.

62.—Though it is an ecclesiastical procession, the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for in those days of revolutionary ferment the Church, which usually supported the Government, was not universally popular.

## A WOMAN'S LAST WORD

The title refers to the old proverb, "a woman will always have the last word in a quarrel." This "woman's last word," however, is not one of recrimination, but of reconciliation and

submission. She will even sacrifice what she believes to be true (st. iv), lest she should lose her domestic peace as Eve lost Paradise. Cf. *A Lovers' Quarrel* st. xiii:—

Not from the heart beneath—  
 'Twas a bubble born of breath,  
 Neither sneer nor vaunt,  
 Nor reproach nor taunt.  
 See a word, how it severeth!  
 Oh, power of life and death  
 In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

### A TOCCATA OF GALUPPI'S

Baldassare Galuppi (1706–85), a musical composer of some note in his day, who was for the last years of his life organist at St. Mark's Cathedral, Venice, is here taken by Browning as an exponent and critic of the frivolous, empty life with which the name of this Italian city has long been associated. But the toccata speaks to the man who plays it—a student of science—not only of the emptiness of life at Venice in the eighteenth century, but of the emptiness of life in general, for st. xiii is, of course, to be taken ironically; as he thinks of the beauty and gaiety of Venice all turned to “dust and ashes,” he feels “chilly and grown old,” for even so all human activities seem to pass away into nothingness.

The *toccata* is marked by the repetition of phrases calculated to display a peculiar facility of touch (It. *toccare*, to touch) on the musician's part.

90, 6.—“The ceremony of wedding the Adriatic was instituted in 1174 by Pope Alexander III, who gave the Doge a gold ring from his own finger in token of the victory achieved by the Venetian fleet at Istria over Frederick Barbarossa, in defense of the Pope's quarrel. When his Holiness gave the ring, he desired the Doge to throw a similar ring into the sea annually, in commemoration of the event.”—Brewer.

8.—**Shylock's bridge.** The Rialto.

91, 18.—**clavichord.** An old-fashioned instrument, with keys and strings, the predecessor of the modern pianoforte.

The musical technicalities made use of are thus elucidated by Porter and Clarke, *Poems of Robert Browning*:—

“The technical musical allusions in the poem are all to be found in the 7th, 8th, and 9th stanzas. The *lesser thirds* (line 19) are minor thirds (intervals containing three semitones), and are of common occurrence, but the diminished sixth is an interval rarely used. Ordinarily a *diminished sixth* (seven semitones), exactly the same interval as a perfect fifth, instead of giving a plaintive, mournful, or minor impression, would suggest a feeling

of rest and satisfaction. There is one way, however, in which it can be used,—as a suspension, in which the root of the chord on the *lowered* super-tonic of the scale is suspended from above into the chord with added seventh on the super-tonic, making a diminished sixth between the root of the first and the third of the second chord. The effect of this progression is most dismal, and possibly Browning had it in mind. *Suspensions* (line 20) are notes which are held over from one chord into another, and must be made according to certain strict musical rules. This holding over of a note always produces a dissonance, and must be followed by a concord,—in other words, a *solution*. Sevenths are very important dissonances in music, and a *commiserating seventh* (line 21) is most likely the variety called a minor seventh. Being a somewhat less mournful interval than the lesser thirds and the diminished sixths, whether real or imaginary, yet not so final as 'those solutions' which seem to put an end to all uncertainty, and therefore to life, they arouse in the listeners to Galuppi's playing a hope that life may last, although in a sort of dissonantal, Wagnerian fashion. The 'commiserating sevenths' are closely connected with the 'dominant's persistence' (line 24). The dominant chord in music is the chord written on the fifth degree of the scale, and it almost always has a seventh added to it, and in a large percentage of cases is followed by the tonic, the chord on the first degree of the scale. Now, in fugue form a theme is first presented in the tonic key, then the same theme is repeated in the dominant key, the latter being called the answer; after some development of the theme the fugue comes to what is called an episode, after which the theme is presented first, in the dominant. 'Hark! the dominant's persistence' alludes to this musical fact; but according to rule this dominant must be answered in the tonic an octave above the first presentation of the theme, and 'So an octave struck the answer.' Thus the inexorable solution comes in after the dominant's persistence. Although life seemed possible with commiserating sevenths, the tonic, a resistless fate, strikes the answer that all must end."

## MY STAR

This poem has been interpreted as having personal reference to Mrs. Browning; but there is no reason to set it apart from the other poems described by Browning as "always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons."

94, 4.—*angled spar*. "A prism of Iceland spar has the property of polarizing or dividing a ray of light into two parts. Suppose this polarized ray be passed through a plate of Iceland spar, at a certain angle, and a second prism of Iceland spar be rotated in front of it, different colors will be given out, complementary tints being ninety degrees apart, and four times during the rotation the light will vanish completely. Some such experiment as this was probably in the poet's mind when he made the comparison with the angled spar."—Porter and Clarke.

## INSTANS TYRANNUS

The title ("The Threatening Tyrant") is taken from Horace, *Odes* III, iii:—

Justum et tenacem propositi virum,  
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,  
Non vultus instantis tyranni,  
Mente quatit solida.

Gladstone translates the passage:—

The just man in his purpose strong,  
No madding crowd can turn to wrong.  
The forceful tyrant's brow and word  
His firm-set spirit cannot move.

97, 70.—**sprang to his feet.** Before this he had squatted.  
See line 14.

## A PRETTY WOMAN

Some natures, according to Browning, are incapable of love, and the only way is to take them as they are and make the best of them.

98, 8.—**keep you what they make you.** Their own.

## THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

The utter devotion of this poem is, in Browning's view, characteristic of true love.

104, 62.—**Ten lines.** Of history or biography.

65.—**the Abbey.** Westminster Abbey, where England's heroes are commemorated.

67-88.—Cf. *In a Balcony*, 664-7:—

We live, and they experiment on life—  
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof  
To overlook the farther. Let us be  
The thing they look at!

## THE PATRIOT

In the first edition Brescia in Lombardy was mentioned as the scene of this story; but Browning stated that the hero is not Arnold of Brescia, as some of the critics surmised.

## MEMORABILIA

“Things worth remembering.” This poem is said to have been suggested to Browning by overhearing a man say in a shop that he had met and spoken to Shelley. By the metaphor of the eagle’s feather, Browning conveys to the reader that if such a piece of good fortune had happened to him, it would have been enough to blot out all other incidents. As to the influence of Shelley on Browning’s early work, see Introduction, pp. i and x.

## ANDREA DEL SARTO

This is one of the most remarkable of Browning’s shorter poems, whether regarded as a study of character or of art. It was written when he was living in Florence, in answer to a request from a friend in England for a copy of the portrait of Andrea del Sarto and his wife in the Pitti Palace. Browning could not get one, and sent the poem instead. Mr. Ernest Radford thus describes the picture:—“The artist and his wife are presented at half length. Andrea turns towards her with a pleading expression on his face. . . . His right arm is round her; he leans forward as if searching her face for the strength that has gone from himself. . . . She holds the letter in her hand, and looks neither at that nor at him, but straight out of the canvas. And the beautiful face with the red-brown hair is passive and unruffled, and awfully expressionless. There is silent thunder in this face if there ever was, but there is no anger. It suggests only a very mild, and at the same time immutable determination to have her own way.”

Browning develops, in his favorite form of the dramatic monologue, the suggestion given by Andrea’s portrait of himself; for the details he is chiefly indebted to Vasari’s *Life of Andrea del Sarto*, as will be seen from the following extracts (translation by Blashfield and Hopkins, with Mrs. Foster’s notes):—“Had this master possessed a somewhat bolder and more elevated mind, had he been as much distinguished for higher qualifications as he was for genius and depth of judgment in the art he practised, he would, beyond all doubt, have been without an equal. But there was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature, which rendered

it impossible that those evidences of ardor and animation, which are proper to the more exalted character, should ever appear in him; nor did he at any time display one particle of that elevation which, could it but have been added to the advantages wherewith he was endowed, would have rendered him a truly divine painter. . . . At that time there was a most beautiful girl in the Via di San Gallo, who was married to a cap-maker, and who, though born of a poor and vicious father, carried about her as much pride and haughtiness as beauty and fascination. She delighted in trapping the hearts of men, and among others ensnared the unlucky Andrea, whose immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art, and in great measure to discontinue the assistance which he had given to his parents. Now it chanced that a sudden and grievous illness seized the husband of this woman, who rose no more from his bed, but died thereof. Without taking counsel of his friends therefore; without regard to the dignity of his art or the consideration due to his genius, and to the eminence he had attained with so much labor; without a word, in short, to any of his kindred, Andrea took this Lucrezia di Baccio del Fedè, such was the name of the woman, to be his wife; her beauty appearing to him to merit thus much at his hands, and his love for her having more influence over him than the glory and honor towards which he had begun to make such hopeful advances. But when this news became known in Florence the respect and affection which his friends had previously borne to Andrea changed to contempt and disgust, since it appeared to them that the darkness of this disgrace had obscured for a time all the glory and renown obtained by his talents. But he destroyed his own peace as well as estranged his friends by this act, seeing that he soon became jealous, and found that he had besides fallen into the hands of an artful woman, who made him do as she pleased in all things. He abandoned his own poor father and mother, for example, and adopted the father and sisters of his wife in their stead; inso-much that all who knew the facts mourned over him, and he soon began to be as much avoided as he had previously been sought after." Andrea found this mode of life so oppressive that, on the advice of his friends, he put his wife in safe keeping and went to Paris, where he was richly rewarded by the King of France for his work. But a pitiful letter from his wife induced him to return. "Taking the money which the king con-

fided to him for the purchase of pictures, statues and other fine things, he set off, therefore, having first sworn on the gospels to return in a few months. Arrived happily in Florence, he lived joyously with his wife for some time, making large presents to her father and sisters, but doing nothing for his own parents, whom he would not even see, and who, at the end of a certain period, ended their lives in great poverty and misery." Having spent the money entrusted to him in building a house and indulging himself in various other pleasures, Andrea was afraid to return to France, and remained in Florence in the very lowest position, "procuring a livelihood and passing his time as he best might."

So says Vasari, who at one time was Andrea's pupil, and published his *Lives of the Painters* while Andrea's widow was still in Florence; but recent investigation has failed to reveal the slightest evidence in support of the charge of embezzlement made by Vasari against Andrea, and it has been generally discredited.

**110, 15.—Fiesolè.** The village on the top of the ridge overlooking the quarter of Florence in which Andrea lived.

**111, 25.—It saves a model.** "Andrea rarely painted the countenance of a woman in any place that he did not avail himself of the features of his wife; and if at any time he took his model from any other face there was always a resemblance to hers in the painting, not only because he had this woman constantly before him and depicted her so frequently, but also and what is still more, because he had her lineaments engraven on his heart; it thus happens that almost all his female heads have a certain something which recalls that of his wife."—Vasari.

**32.—no one's.** Not even his.

**36–45.—Lucrezia** has lost only her first pride in her husband; he has lost all his youthful ambitions and aspirations, as the day loses its noontide splendor, and the glory of summer changes to the decay of autumn.

**43.—huddled more inside.** The trees are huddled together within the convent wall, and have no room to grow; but they are, perhaps, safer—so, perhaps, too, is the painter in his own home, though he misses the inspiration and development that come from contact with the world. Andrea acquiesces in his seclusion, but he cannot help regretting his lost opportunities.

**113, 93.—Morello.** A mountain near Florence.

105.—**the Urbinate.** Raphael of Urbino, the most famous of Italian painters; he died in 1520, ten years before Andrea. Vasari says that Andrea copied a portrait by Raphael with such exactness that Raphael's own pupils, who had helped in the painting, could not tell the copy from the original.

114, 130.—**Agnolo.** The great Italian painter usually called Michael Angelo in English; he was doubtless the "Someone" of line 76; Andrea refers to him again in line 184.

150.—**Fontainebleau.** A royal palace not far from Paris.

115, 166.—See quotation from Vasari above for Andrea's recall from France by his wife's importunities.

173.—**there.** In your heart.

174.—**ere the triumph.** Of my genius in art.

116, 189-193.—Bocchi, in his *Beauties of Florence*, states that Michael Angelo said to Raphael, referring to Andrea:—"There is a little man in Florence, who, if he were employed upon such great works as have been given to you, would bring the sweat to your brow."

199.—Lucrezia has interrupted to ask Andrea about whom and what he is talking. She is evidently paying no attention.

209-10.—Mount Morello can no longer be seen, the lights on the city wall are lit, and the little owls, named in Italy from their call, *Chiu*, are crying; darkness is falling on the house, as on Andrea's life.

212-18.—See above for the charge against Andrea of building a house for himself with the money entrusted to him by King Francis to buy pictures with.

117, 220.—The cousin (or lover) who waits outside is the third character in the little drama—silent and unseen, but profoundly affecting the situation.

118, 263.—**Leonard.** Leonardo da Vinci, the third great Italian painter of the time; he died the year before Raphael.

266.—Andrea at last acknowledges to himself that his wife has been a hindrance instead of a help, a drag preventing his ascent from the second rank to the first: but he prefers this to the sacrifice of giving her up.

#### "DE GUSTIBUS—"

The Latin proverb *De gustibus non est disputandum*, corresponds to the English one "There's no accounting for tastes." Browning says that if our preferences persist after death, his will be, not for England, but for Italy.



119, 22.—*cicála*. The tree-cricket, often heard in Italy in the heat of summer.

120, 36.—*liver-wing*. Right arm. The Bourbon rule in Southern Italy was exceedingly unpopular, and numerous attempts were made to cast it off; the king here referred to was Ferdinand II, whose cruelties were denounced by Gladstone in 1851. He was succeeded by his son, who was expelled in 1860, and Naples was incorporated with the new kingdom of Italy. Browning sympathized with all the Italians' attempts to regain their liberty and independence, even when they went the length of assassination.

### THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

In the Church of St. Augustine at Fano, on the Adriatic, there is a picture called "The Guardian Angel," by Guercino, an Italian painter of the seventeenth century. It represents an angel with outspread wings embracing a kneeling child, whose hands he folds in prayer.

121, 6.—*another child*. The poet himself.

7.—*retrieve*. Bring back to the right way.

14-16.—In the picture cherubs point to the opened heaven, and the child looks upward past the angel's head.

18.—*bird of God*. This beautiful expression is translated from Dante's *Purgatorio*.

122, 20-21.—The angel seems to be enfolding the child with the skirt of his robe, held in his left hand.

39-40.—The angel's head is turned away, but the reason given is Browning's own.

123, 46.—*My angel with me, too*. His wife. See line 54.

54.—*dear old friend*. Alfred Domett, a much-prized friend of Browning's youth, who in 1842 settled in New Zealand.

56.—*Ancona*. On the Italian coast, near Fano. Browning and his wife visited both places soon after their first settlement in Italy in 1846, and the poem was doubtless written at the time. Mrs. Browning writes of the visit to her friend, Miss Mitford:—"So we went to Ancona—a striking sea city, holding up against the brown rocks, and elbowing out the purple tides—beautiful to look upon. An exfoliation of the rock itself you would call the houses that seem to grow there—so identical is the color and character."

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL

This poem "exhibits something of the life of the Scaligers and the Casaubons, of many an early scholar, like Roger Bacon's friend Pierre de Maricourt, working at some region of knowledge, and content to labor without fame so long as he mastered thoroughly whatever he undertook."—*Contemporary Review*, IV, 135.

The scholars are bearing their master to his tomb in one of the Italian hill-cities, perched on the top of the rocks, like Orvieto or Perugia.

124, 3.—**croft**. Enclosed tilled or pasture land.—**thorpe**.—Little village.

125, 34.—**Apollo**. The classical ideal of manly beauty. His statues usually represent him holding the lyre.

39.—**Moaned he**. Did he moan?

45.—**the world**. Of classical lore, which was bent on escaping.

126, 56.—**the curtain**. Of the play of life.

68.—**Sooner**. Before he had gathered all books had to give.

127, 86.—**Calculus**. The stone.

88.—**Tussis**. Cough.

95.—**soul-hydroptic**. "Every lust is a kind of hydropic temper, and the more we drink the more we shall thirst."—Tillotson, quoted by Webster. **hydroptic**, dropsical.

96-100.—Cf. **Abt Vogler**:—"On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round."

113-124.—Cf. *Rabbi ben Ezra*, stanzas xxiii-xxv, pp. 144-145.

128, 129-131.—**Hoti**, . . . **Oun**, . . . **De**. Greek particles, meaning respectively "that," "therefore," "towards." As to the last, Browning wrote to the editor of the *London Daily News* on Nov. 20, 1874, as follows:—

"In a clever article you speak of 'the doctrine of the enclitic *De*'—'which with all deference to Mr. Browning, in point of fact, does not exist.' No, not to Mr. Browning: but pray defer to Herr Buttmanh, whose fifth list of 'enclitics' ends 'with the inseparable *De*,'—or to Curtius, whose fifth list ends also with '*De* (meaning '*towards*,' and as a demonstrative appendage).' That this is not to be confounded with the accentuated '*De*, meaning but,' was the 'Doctrine' which the Grammarian bequeathed to those capable of receiving it."

## ONE WAY OF LOVE

This sublime devotion is characteristic of Browning's ideal of love. Cf. *The Last Ride Together*.

## ONE WORD MORE

A special interest attaches to this poem because it is the only one addressed by Browning, directly and avowedly, to his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It was originally appended to the collection of poems, called *Men and Women* (1855). Browning uses the sonnets written by Raphael and a portrait painted by Dante to illustrate the desire of the artist to show his personal affection in some other way than that of his familiar craft, which has become professional and belongs to the world, so that everybody feels entitled to criticize. But as the poet cannot paint pictures, or carve statues, or make music to show his love, a semblance of resource remains in the use of a slightly different form of art from that which he commonly practises. Instead of writing dramatically, he may write, for once in his own person; for just as, according to the ancient myth, the moon would turn to her lover a side unseen by other mortals, so the poet has two soul-sides, "one to face the world with, One to show a woman when he loves her." While he says this of himself, he likes to think it of her, his "moon of poets." Her poetry is the world's side, and he too admires her from that point of view; but the best is when he leaves the standpoint of literary appreciation for the more intimate relation of personal knowledge and affection. Then it is that he realizes the love that Raphael sought to express by his sonnets and Dante by his picture.

130, 5.—a century of sonnets. Guido Reni had a book of 100 drawings of Raphael's, but Raphael is only known to have made four sonnets. Raphael never married, but he was very much in love with a certain lady, who has been identified, not very convincingly, with the original of one or other of the portraits attributed to his hand.

131, 22-24.—The Sistine Madonna is now in the Dresden Art Gallery, the Madonna di Foligno is in the Vatican at Rome. "The Madonna at Florence is that called del Granduca, which represents her as 'appearing to a votary in a vision'—so say the describers; it is in the earlier manner, and very beautiful. I think I meant La Belle Jardinière—but am not sure—for the picture in the Louvre." (Browning to W. J. Rolfe). The Louvre Madonna is seated in the midst of a garden, in which there are lilies. All these are among the most famous works of Raphael.

27.—**Guido Reni.** A celebrated Italian painter about a century later than Raphael. See note on line 5.

32.—**Dante.** The first great Italian poet (1265–1321), who in *The Divine Comedy* attached eternal opprobrium to his enemies by assigning to them conspicuous places in Hell. Stanzas v, vi, and vii refer to a passage in his *Vita Nuova*, in which he has idealized his love for Beatrice, whom he had known as a young girl:—"On that day which fulfilled the year since my lady had been made of the citizens of eternal life; remembering me of her as I sat alone, I betook myself to draw the resemblance of an angel upon certain tablets. And while I did thus, chancing to turn my head, I perceived that some were standing beside me to whom I should have given courteous welcome, and that they were observing what I did: also I learned afterwards that they had been there a while before I perceived them. Perceiving whom, I rose for salutation and said: 'Another was with me.' Afterwards, when they had left me, I set myself again to the same occupation, to wit, to the drawing figures of angels." (Section 35, Rossetti's translation.) It will be noticed that Browning's interpretation of the incident goes somewhat beyond the original, which gives no indication that those who interrupted Dante were people he scarified in the *Inferno*.

33.—**Beatrice.** Four syllables—*bā ah trē' tshe*.

132, 57.—**Bice.** Two syllables—*bē' tshe*. A contraction of endearment of Beatrice.

133, 74–93.—There are two accounts in the Pentateuch of the smiting of the rock by Moses.—Exodus xvii. 1–7 and Numbers xx. 2–11. The latter reads: "And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? . . . And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Here, again, Browning has allowed his imagination to play round the original record.

94–5.—When the children of Israel were rebellious against Moses, they cried, "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots" (Exodus xvi. 3).

97.—Exodus xxxiv. 29–35. **cloven**, because, following the Latin translation of this passage, the early painters represented

Moses with two horns on his forehead. The original means to shine out or dart forth like rays of light.

134, 101-2.—Moses married Zipporah, Jethro's daughter (Exodus ii. 16-21), and an Ethiopian woman (Numbers xii. 1).

121.—**fresco**. Painting in fresh plaster, usually done on the inside wall of a church.

125.—**missal-marge**. The margin of a prayer book.

135, 136-8.—**Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, Lippo, Roland and Andrea** were among the characters in *Men and Women*, originally fifty in number.

143.—**how I speak**. The personal instead of the dramatic mode of expression.

145.—**Here in London**. The poem was written in London in September, 1855.

150.—**Samminiato**. The common pronunciation of San Miniato, an old church, surrounded by cypress trees, overlooking Florence.

136, 160.—**mythos**. The old myth or story of the love of Diana, the moon-goddess, for the mortal Endymion.

163.—**Zoroaster** (589-513 B.C.) Founder of the Persian religion and a famous astronomer.

164.—**Galile'o** (1564-1642). Professor at Padua, and one of the founders of modern science. After being condemned by the church, he continued his studies in his house at Florence, which overlooks the city from the same side as San Miniato.

165.—**Homer**. In allusion to the *Hymn to the Moon*.

—**Keats**.—The author of *Endymion*. Browning expressed special admiration for him in the poem entitled "Popularity."

172-9.—Exodus xxiv. 9-11: "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness . . . also they saw God, and did eat and drink."

## RABBI BEN EZRA

Ibn Ezra, or Abenezra (1092-1167), was a great Jewish scholar, poet, philosopher, and physician, who wandered over Europe, Asia, and Africa in pursuit of knowledge. As will be seen from the notes, his writings contain some of the views expressed by Browning's sage.

138, 1.—The Rabbi seems to be at the end of middle age, just where old age begins. He looks back to youth, forward to old age.

4.—A poem of Abenezra's, quoted by Dr. Michael Sachs, has the same thought: "In deiner Hand liegt mein Geschick."

Stanzas ii and iii should be taken together. The sense is: "I do not remonstrate because youth, amassing flowers, sighed . . ." He does not find fault with the foolish ambitions of his youth, for these aspirations, though they are vain, are what distinguish man from the beasts. This thought is expressed by Abenezra in his Commentary on Job xxxv. 11: "Man has the sole privilege of becoming superior to the beast and the fowl."

139, 25-30.—Stanza v expresses a favorite thought of Browning's. Cf. *A Death in the Desert*, 576-8:—

Progress, man's distinctive mark alone,  
Not God's and not the beasts': God is, they are,  
Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.

40-42.—Cf. *Saul*, lines 160 and 295.

140, 48.—**soul on its lone way.** "The soul of man is called lonely because it is separated during its union with the body from the universal soul."—Abenezra's Commentary on Psalm xxii. 22.

57.—Cf. *Saul*, line 242.

141, 67-72.—For the union of sensuousness and spirituality, cf. *Evelyn Hope* and note on it above.

145, 151.—**Potter's wheel.** Cf. Isaiah lxiv. 8: "We are the clay and thou our Potter." This is a favorite scriptural and oriental metaphor, used also by Quarles and in Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam, but by no previous poet with such deep significance as here.

## PROSPICE

"Look forward." This noble defiance of death was written in the autumn after Browning lost his wife, and appeared first in the *Atlantic Monthly* for June, 1864.

148, 19.—**life's arrears.** All the pain that a man might fairly have expected to suffer in life, but missed.

23.—**fiend-voices.** The ancient belief was that the soul at the moment of separation from the body is the object of a struggle between the angels, whose office is to bear away the

freed spirit (Luke xvi. 22) and the powers of darkness who strive to snatch it from salvation. For this reason fervent prayers are offered for a soul on the point of departure. The Litany in the Book of Common Prayer contains a petition for deliverance "in the hour of death," and the following is from the office for the dying in the Roman Breviary: "Cedat tibi teterimus satanas cum satellitibus suis: in adventu tuo te comitantibus Angelis contremiscat atque in aeternae noctis chaos immane diffugiat. . . . Confundantur igitur et erubescant omnes tartareae legiones, et ministri satanae iter tuum impedire non audeant" (Sykes).

149, 27-28.—Browning had a strong faith in immortality, and repeatedly expressed it in both prose and verse. He said: "I know I shall meet my dearest friends again."

### YOUTH AND ART

This is a light, humorous expression of Browning's favorite doctrine, "all for love, and the world well lost." The singer who reflects on the chances of her youth has gained worldly success, but she has missed the great prize of life.

150, 8.—**Gibson**, John (1790-1866). A celebrated sculptor.

12.—**Grisi**. Giulia Grisi, a famous opera singer of the same period.

151, 18.—The young students were content perforce with the scant diet of the Hindoo ascetics.

31.—**E in alt**. The high E, which is difficult for a singer to reach.

32.—**chromatic scale**. A scale with semi-tone intervals.

153, 58.—**bals-parés**. Fancy dress balls.

60.—**R. A.** Member of the Royal Academy, at the Board of which he meets the Prince of Wales.

### APPARENT FAILURE

The cheery tone of this expression of Browning's optimism may be compared with Tennyson's less confident faith:—

Oh, yet we trust that somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill.  
—*In Memoriam*, liv

154, 3.—**your Prince**. Louis Napoleon, only son of Napoleon III, was born in the spring of 1856. Browning was in Paris

during the summer of the same year. The poem was published in *Dramatis Personæ* (1864).

7-8.—The Congress of Paris met in 1856, at the close of the Crimean War, to discuss important issues in European politics. Prince Gortschakoff represented Russia; Cavour, then Prime Minister of Piedmont, pleaded the cause of united Italy, and Buol, the Austrian Foreign Minister, resisted any modification of the existing state of affairs, which gave Austria supreme control.

12.—**Vaucluse.** A village on the Sorgue (a tributary of the Rhone) where the great Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374) once made his home.

14.—**debt.** What is due. As Petrarch's name preserves the fame of Vaucluse and of the Sorgue, so Browning will pay his obligations to Paris by commemorating the Morgue, which, he says with a touch of irony, has made the Seine famous.

155, 39.—**the Tuileries.** At that time the palace of the Emperor at Paris.

44.—**what no Republic missed.** The equality of death.

### HERVÉ RIEL

Browning was in France when it was invaded by Prussia in 1870, and escaped from the country with some difficulty before the outbreak of the disorders which followed the collapse of the French resistance. Desiring to express his sympathy for the sufferers by the siege of Paris, he sold this poem to *Cornhill Magazine* for £100, which he gave as a subscription to the Relief Fund. It was written in 1867 and first published in 1871. The incident it relates was at first denied in France, but the records of the admiralty of the time proved that Browning was correct, except in one small detail: the reward Hervé Riel asked and received was "*un congé absolu*"—a holiday for the rest of his life.

157, 1.—**the Hogue.** Cap La Hogue, where the French fleet was attacked in 1692 by the English and Dutch, and forced to retire. The expedition aimed at the restoration of James II, who watched the defeat from the Norman coast.

5.—**St. Malo,** at the mouth of the Rance River, in Brittany, has a harbor which is described as "safe, but difficult of approach." In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was a flourishing port, and from it Jacques Cartier sailed in 1535 to explore the River St. Lawrence.



—**the Rance.** A small stream with picturesque steep banks. The town is situated on a rock between the harbor and the mouth of the river.

158, 18.—**twelve and eighty.** French, quatre-vingt-douze.

30.—**Plymouth Sound.** In the West of England, an important harbor and naval station.

159, 43.—**pressed.** Forced to serve.

—**Tourville.** The French admiral.

44.—**Croisickese.** Of Croisic, a little fishing village of Brittany, where Browning liked to stay. See the title of the next poem in this selection. It was no doubt at Croisic that Browning picked up the story.

46.—**Malouins.** Men of St. Malo.

49.—**Grève.** La Grande Grève, the sandy shallows of the coast about St. Malo, especially to the east.

53.—**Solidor.** A small harbor near the mouth of the Rance, beside the town of St. Servan. A fort of the same name defends it.

160, 75.—**profound** (here used as a noun). Depths.

161, 92.—**rampired.** Protected by ramparts or fortifications.

95.—**for.** Instead of.

163, 135.—**the Louvre.** A famous palace at Paris, now used as an art museum. On its external walls there are eighty-six statues of notable Frenchmen, but not, of course, one of the forgotten hero, Hervé Riel.

## THE TWO POETS OF CROISIC

The Prologue and the Epilogue are connected with the main poem (which is here omitted) only by the thought, common to all three, that love is a necessary part of the poet's life and art. The Prologue may cause a little difficulty to begin with by its extraordinary conciseness, but this only adds to its charm when the meaning has been grasped. The grammatical construction and the relation of the stanzas to each other are indicated in the following prose rendering: "As a bank of moss stands bare till some May morning it is made beautiful by the sudden growth of the violets; as the night sky is dark and louring till a bright star pierces the concealing clouds; so the world seemed to hem in my life with disgrace till your face appeared to brighten it with the smile of God—the divine gift of love."

In the Epilogue it is a young girl who repeats to the poet the "pretty tale" he has once told her, and makes her own applica-

tion of its significance. The story is found in Greek literature both in prose and in verse.

166, 50.—Here, as in lines 15 and 21, the poet has attempted to interrupt.

167, 77.—**Lotte.** The pet name of Charlotte Buff, upon whom Goethe modelled the heroine of *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. The reference here, however, is rather to Goethe's way of treating women in general than to the particular case of Lotte, for she was already engaged to be married when he met her.

168, 100-2.—The sweet lilt of the treble was supplied by the chirping of the cricket, when its absence would have allowed the predominance of the sombre bass. Cf. lines 112-4.

169, 120.—(**There, enough!**) To what interruption of the poet's does this reply?

### PHEIDIPPIDES

This is Browning's romantic setting of an incident of the Persian war which is thus recounted by the Greek historian Herodotus (VI, 105. Rawlinson's translation):—

"And first, before they left Athens, the generals sent off to Sparta a herald, one Pheidip'pides, who was by birth an Athenian, and by birth and practice a trained runner. This man, according to the account which he gave to the Athenians on his return, when he was near Mount Parthenium, above Tegea, fell in with the god Pan, who called him by his name, and bade him ask the Athenians 'wherefore they neglected him so entirely, when he was kindly disposed towards them, and had often helped them in times past, and would do so again in time to come?' The Athenians, entirely believing in the truth of this report, as soon as their affairs were once more in good order, set up a temple to Pan under the Acropolis, and, in return for the message which I have recorded, established in his honor yearly sacrifices and a torch-race.

"On the occasion of which we speak, when Pheidippides was sent by the Athenian generals, and, according to his own account saw Pan on his journey, he reached Sparta on the very next day after quitting the city of Athens. Upon his arrival he went before the rulers, and said to them:—

"'Men of Lacedæmon, the Athenians beseech you to hasten to their aid, and not allow that state, which is the most ancient in all Greece, to be enslaved by the barbarians. Eretria,

look you, is already carried away captive, and Greece weakened by the loss of no mean city.'

"Thus did Pheidippides deliver the message committed to him. And the Spartans wished to help the Athenians, but were unable to give them any present succor, as they did not like to break their established law. It was the ninth day of the first decade, and they could not march out of Sparta on the ninth, when the moon had not reached the full. So they waited for the full of the moon."

It will be seen that the original story makes no mention of a reward promised by Pan to Pheidippides. This was Browning's own invention, following a later tradition. In connection with the Marathon race at the Olympic games this was the subject of a considerable discussion, to which Professor Ernest A. Gardner contributed the following note as to Pheidippides: "His great exploit, as recorded by Herodotus, was to run from Athens to Sparta within two days, for the practical purpose of summoning the Spartans to help against the Persian invader. The whole Athenian army made a forced march back to Athens immediately after the battle, also for a practical purpose; but there is no reason to suppose that Pheidippides or any one else ran the distance. The tale of his bearing the message of victory and falling dead when he arrived is probably an invention of some later rhetorician; it is referred to by Lucian, as well as by Robert Browning, but the two authorities are about of equal value for an occurrence of the fifth century B.C. It is most unlikely that Herodotus would have omitted such a story if it had been current in his time."

*χαίρετε, νικῶμεν*, the Greek words prefixed by Browning to the poem, form the message which Plutarch and Lucian attribute to the dying runner after Marathon. Browning translates them "Rejoice; we conquer!" and in lines 113-114 makes effective use of the fact that *χαίρετε* ("Hail!" or "be of good cheer!") was also the customary form of salutation with the Greeks. Here again he was indebted to a suggestion derived from Lucian.

170, 4.—**Her of the ægis and spear.** Athene. —**ægis**, shield.

5.—**ye of the bow and the buskin.** Apollo and Artemis. —**buskin**, laced boot.

9.—**Archons.** Rulers or magistrates. —**tettix.** The golden grasshopper worn by Athenians to show that they were autochthons (natives of the country).

11.—**Crowned with the myrtle.** This still refers to **Archons**. Browning is strictly accurate in these points of detail.

171, 18.—**water and earth.** The emblems of subjection. This demand was made in 493 B. C. The invading Persians were defeated at Marathon three years later.

19.—**Eretria.** The chief city of the island of Eubœa, a little north of Athens.

20.—**Hellas.** Greek civilization regarded as a whole.

25-40.—Herodotus, as quoted above, says: "So they waited for the full of the moon." Grote ascribes the delay of the Spartans to conservatism, Rawlinson to envy; there was long-standing jealousy between Athens and Sparta, who were rivals for the leadership of Hellas. Sparta later sent 2,000 men, who arrived after the battle.

32-33.—**Phoibos. Olumpos.** Browning preferred to retain the Greek spelling instead of the Latinized forms "Phœbus" and "Olympus."

172, 47.—**filleted.** Adorned for sacrifice with wreaths and ribbons.

173, 52.—**Parnes.** In North Attica. But according to Herodotus, as quoted above, Pan appeared to Pheidippides near Mount Parthenium in Argolis. This would be on his way from Athens to Sparta: Parnes would not. Professor John Macnaughton suggests that Browning made the change deliberately. "He must have an Attic hill at all costs, when what he wants to say is that it is the spirit of her own mountains, her own autochthonous vigor, which is going to save Athens. He consciously sacrifices, in a small and obvious point, literal accuracy to the larger truth."—*Queen's Quarterly*, April, 1903.

62.—**Erebos.** The darkness under the earth,—Erebus.

174, 72-80.—After Marathon, the Athenians built a temple to Pan and established yearly sacrifices and a torch-race in acknowledgment of the help the god had given them in the battle by affecting the Persians with "panic"—the headlong fear Pan was supposed to inspire.

83.—**Fennel.** Marathon, the name of the place where the battle was fought, is also Greek for fennel. This touch is Browning's own.

175, 87.—**on the razor's edge.** In a critical position—a proverbial phrase in Greek.

89.—**Miltiades.** The leading Athenian citizen of the time and commander of the forces at Marathon.

176, 106.—**Akropolis.** The citadel of Athens.

109.—**the Fennel-field.** Marathon. See note on line 83.

*Pheidippides* is in a measure of Browning's own, composed of dactyls and spondees, each line ending in a half foot or pause. It gives the impression of firm, continuous, and rhythmic emotion, and is generally fitted to convey the exalted sentiment and heroic character of the poem.—Mrs. Orr.

The metrical scheme should be carefully analysed. Dr. D. G. Brunton uses this poem as an illustration of Browning's employment of rhyme "merely as a means of heightening his secondary rhythm. The rhyming words are so far apart that we are aware only of a faint melodious echo. The always artificial and somewhat mechanical effect of rhyme is thus avoided, while its rhythmic essence is retained."

### ECHETLOS

This is a poetical treatment of another Greek legend of the same battle of Marathon (B. C. 490), which saved Greek civilization from overthrow by the Persians. The original story is found in Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I, 32:—"And it chanced, they say, that in the battle a man of rustic appearance and dress appeared, who slew many of the Persians with a ploughshare, and vanished after the fight: and when the Athenians made enquiry of the oracle, the god gave no other answer, but bade them honor the god *Echtlæus*," that is, the holder of the ploughshare.

717, 2.—**Barbarians.** So the Greeks called all the rest of the world.

178, 15.—**Polemarch** (three syllables—rhymes with "stark"). The Athenian archon or magistrate who had charge of the military affairs of the state. Kallimachos, who held this office in B. C. 490, was slain at Marathon.

16.—**phalanx.** The battle-array of the Greek heavy infantry, —ranks eight to sixteen deep.

18.—**Sakian . . . Mede.** Subject races in the Persian empire.

179, 28-30.—**Miltiades and Themistokles**, who had both been held in high honor by the Athenians for their services during the Persian war, afterwards fell into disgrace. Miltiades died of a wound received at Paros, which he had besieged from corrupt motives; Themistokles, convicted of treason, fled to the Persian Court at Sardis, and became a satrap or officer in the service of his hereditary enemies.

## WHY I AM A LIBERAL

In the English political crisis of 1885, when the extension of the suffrage was being hotly debated, a question in this form was addressed to several leading men of letters. This sonnet is Browning's answer.

## EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

We have given at the foot of each poem the date of its publication, and the volume to which this little poem is the Epilogue bears the date 1890; it was actually issued in London on Dec. 12, 1889, the day of Browning's death at Venice. "The report of his illness had quickened public interest in the forthcoming work, and his son had the satisfaction of telling him of its already realized success, while he could still receive a warm, if momentary pleasure from the intelligence." (Mrs. Orr.) Browning prepared the volume for publication while staying in the Asolo villa of his friend Mrs. Arthur Bronson, to whom it is dedicated. The fanciful title is derived from the Italian verb *asolare*—"to disport in the open air, amuse one's self at random"—popularly ascribed, Browning tells us, to Cardinal Bembo, who was Queen Cornaro's secretary, and in his dialogue, *Gli Asolani*, described the discussions on platonic love and kindred subjects the little court at Asolo used to indulge in. To Mrs. Bronson Browning justified the title in the following sentence: "I use it for love of the place and in requital of your pleasant assurance that an early poem of mine first attracted you thither." This was, no doubt, *Pippa Passes*, for which, and further particulars as to Browning's connection with Asolo, see Introduction, pp. xiv and xx.

The Epilogue is a final expression of Browning's profound belief in a future life of hopeful activity. When reading the poem in proof, he said of the third stanza:—"It almost looks like bragging to say this, and as if I ought to cancel it, but it's the simple truth; and as it's true, it shall stand."

As in life he had faith in right, so in death—which only fools think of as a prison of the soul—he would be, not pitied, but encouraged by the good wishes of those who are working in the world.

181, 17.—the unseen. The poet himself after death.

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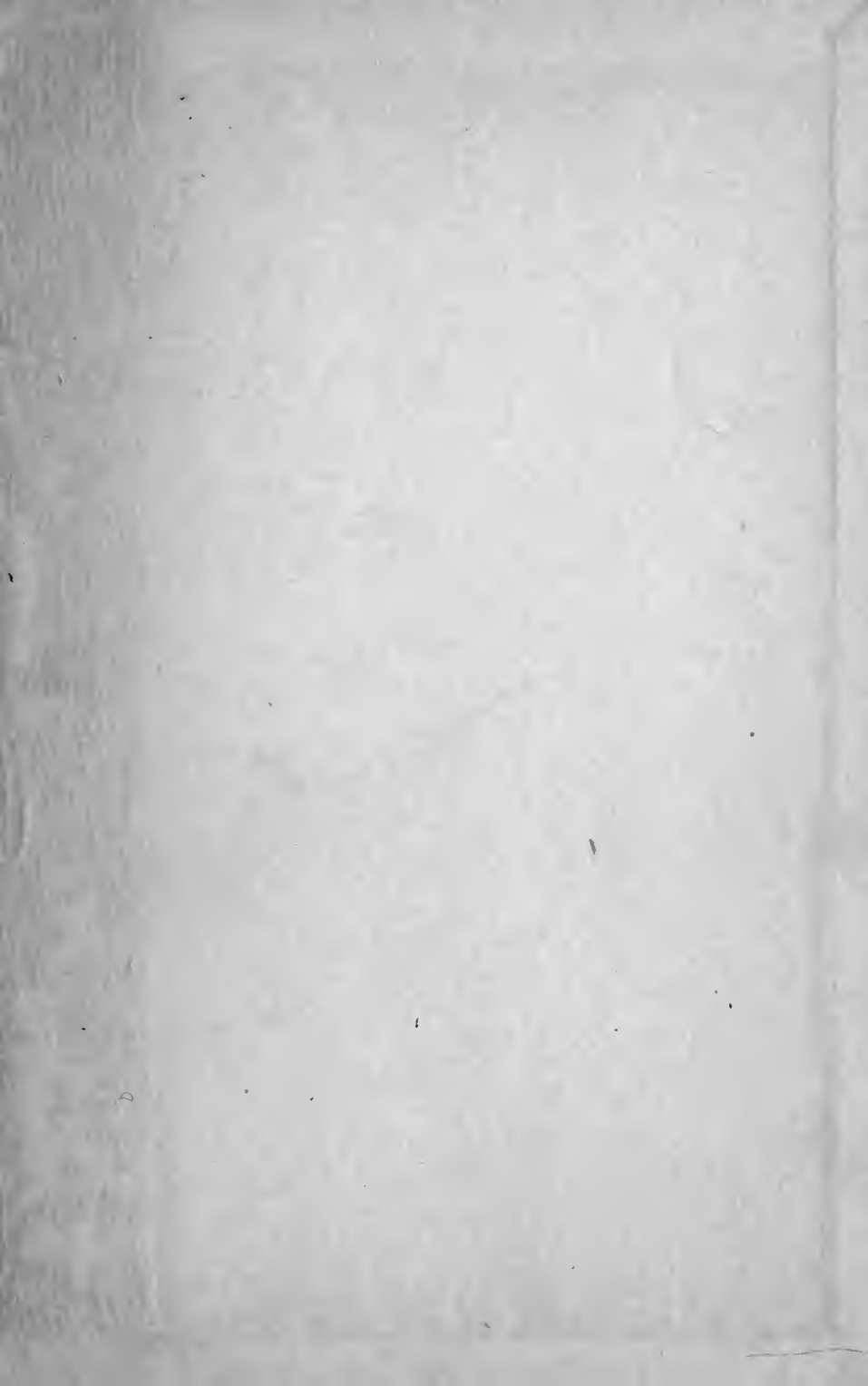
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